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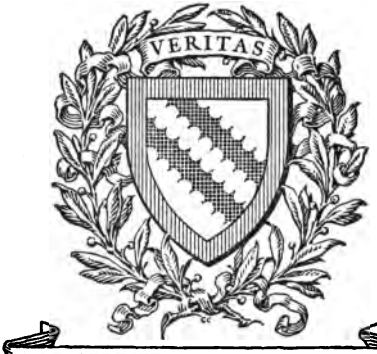
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A LISTENER IN BABEL

Vida D. Scudder

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A LISTENER IN BABEL

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A LISTENER IN BABEL

BEING A SERIES OF IMAGINARY
CONVERSATIONS HELD AT THE
CLOSE OF THE LAST CENTURY
AND REPORTED

BY

VIDA D. SCUDDER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1903

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS

HILDA LATHROP: *A listener in Babel.*

MRS. LATHROP: *Mother of Hilda Lathrop.*

MR. STUART: *An English artist, living in Florence.*

LAWRENCE FERGUSON: *An English socialist.*

DOROTHY GERARD FERGUSON: *Wife of Lawrence Ferguson.*

DR. BROOKS: *Professor of Biology.*

HENRIETTA MORSE: *Instructor in Economics.*

MISS ABBOTT: *Head-worker at Langley House, a social settlement.*

JANET FROTHINGHAM:
MILDRED ELLIS:
JESSIE BANCROFT:
} *Residents of Langley House.*

PHILIP MERVYN: *A young lawyer.*

MR. O'HAGAN: *A labor leader.*

MR. SIMPSON: *A Russian anarchist.*

MISS HARDING: *A worker in the Associated Charities.*

DR. WILKINSON: *Pastor of the First Church.*

MR. HOWARD BROWN: *A business man of high standing.*

DR. HUMPHRIES: *A philanthropist.*

KATIE DONOVAN:
MAGGIE MURPHY:
SONIA LIFSCHITZ:
} *Working-girls.*

FATHER PHILLIPS: *An Anglican priest.*

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FOREWORD

We are all dimly aware that the drama of life is greater than we know. A conversation here, a casual incident there, the swift touch of a stranger's personality that leaves us other than we were, — such things strike at times into the deeper consciousness uninvaded by most outward happenings, and we recognize hints of hidden relations which below our ken are working out on a vast scale the character that is destiny. Hamlet, passing wistful through the play that bears his name, is to us evidently the central figure in the movement of events: to himself he seems spectator only of a drifting stream of alien circumstance. There may, for aught we know to the contrary, exist witnesses of the human drama to whom the significant rôles and the crucial moments appear where we should never look for them. As we move onward, shadow-beset, through the mysterious play of the actual, the plot is not for our discerning: we can but trust, a little blindly, that some plot is there.

Art, impassioned for unity, is constantly driven

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to invent a plot where she perceives none. Desirous not to discuss life, but to present it, she must eliminate, suppress, reduce the scale and hasten the time. How small a portion of the sum total of formative experience can even the most prolix and analytical novel show to us! How many of those wider reactions which, after all, form a large part of living, it must wholly ignore! The intellectual life, above all, that life so quick within us, fiction can hardly reveal at all. Man loving it can show, man hating, man in action; man thinking, only rarely, and by a *tour de force*.

Indeed, literature in general presents thought mainly in the arrested conclusions of philosopher or critic, — projected far from personality as it were, detached, abstract. Yet thought, as we know it, is most vivid as first generated; irradiate with personality, it flashes from mind to mind. It occupies itself largely, to be sure, with those matters which we falsely call impersonal, — with our relations to race, to nation, to spiritual realities, to the social whole; but the process of adjusting these relations is to many people the most significant part of their life-story. May not art, for once, abandon the attempt at formal plot in quest of a wider suggestiveness? May it not at the same time, refusing to retreat on the abstract and completed, seek to present

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the stir and play of the inner life through scenes taken full size, as it were, from that larger drama of the common thought which involves us all? Surely one may hope that such scenes, fragmentary though they must be, will possess interest for the minority, since they may present, with a truthfulness possible in hardly any other way, certain phases in the experience of a modern seeker.

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A LISTENER IN BABEL

CHAPTER I

THE LISTENER

I

When Hilda Lathrop was a little thing, not more than ten years old, she used to wonder why it hurt so much to be very happy that one could not bear the pain, and had to run away. She remembered one special day in particular long afterward, when she was a grown woman. She and her mamma of the beautiful, mourning eyes were walking with another lady in a narrow road that led between moss-grown, ferny walls, above the head of the lake of Geneva. The child felt dimly the presence of the wonderful blue below, gleaming like the turquoise ring on her wee finger, of the soft violet tones through which played the green of Alpine pastures in the distant Alps of Savoy, of the battlemented Dent du Midi, that rose, a serrated, snow-flecked rampart, cutting into the sky at the extremity of the lake. But, child-like, though she noticed these things

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she took more conscious glee in the fairy delicacy of the fern-clusters nestling on the old stone wall. Suddenly, however, the wall opened, and they stepped out into the wide free meadows that sloped downward to the water. The ladies exclaimed with delight; for in the fine deep grass there swayed gayly on vigorous stem radiant hosts, not of golden daffodils such as Wordsworth saw, but of starry narcissus. Fragrance, penetrating, elusive, filled the air; the small Hilda stood knee-deep in flowers; they danced on a bank above her, a white glory against the violet hills, they swept as far as eye could see, glistering leagues of distance beneath the white shining of the snows.

"See, little daughter!" cried the mother, with a smile in her mourning eyes.

The child stood stock-still for an instant, gazing; then something caught her breath, and she felt as it were a terrible pressure. Was it ecstasy? Was it suffering? She could never tell, in later years. She only knew that she turned abruptly and scampered away, — catching sight as she ran of her own little red stockings, queerly mixed with the green and white of the shining pasture, — back to the safe shelter of the lane, where with her small person all athrob, she betook herself to chasing a lizard.

"Does n't the child care for flowers?" she heard her mother's friend say.

"Care for them? She adores them! She 's al-

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ready beginning to sketch them, and very daintily too, in her little sketch-book. I can't imagine what makes her behave so," was the answer.

"Not care for flowers!" Why, the brief vision, voluntarily foregone, of that intense shining of blossoms was with Hilda Lathrop through her lifetime, — a joy ever ready to be summoned, in gray and sordid hours, by that "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude."

Why then had she "behaved so"? That was the question some one asked her long years afterward, when she told this childish recollection, half laughing, half sighing, as they sat by the fire at Langley House, — idle, for a wonder, — one chilly autumn day.

"I suppose it might have been simply the longing for the personal fulfilment," mused Hilda, her keen clear face softened to gentleness by the play of the firelight: "Even a child feels that, I think. And of course, as one grows older, there is almost a sense of outrage mingling in the pain with which we find that we are never to be satisfied by 'the time and the place and the loved one, all together.'"

"I'm inclined to think," rejoined the other, "that it was something nobler: part of the ever-revived pang of the idealist. Unusual beauty always hurts, because it quickens 'the longing for something afar from the sphere of our sorrow.' You often felt the same thing, did n't you, as you grew older?"

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"Oh yes! And more and more often. The instinctive recoil from happiness shaped my life. Once above all" —

She stopped abruptly. Her fine, firm artist's hand was lifted to her forehead. Presently she continued: —

"But I think there is another explanation, though I don't know that I can make it clear." Not, she went on to say, the presence of one exclusively beloved, but the presence of all men, had ever been, so she believed, the substance of her unconscious desires. What she had felt was simply the longing for untrammelled fellowship in the experience of supreme beauty. The craving for joy of a whole race sorrowing and dispossessed throbbed at such times in her heart, and the great hunger of the disinherited, of the solitary, of those in cities pent, weighed heavy though unrecognized upon her. Thus her own small person, confronted by a beauty that transcended her power as an individual to compass, yet racked by a sense of illimitable need vibrating along her every nerve, fled in despair, routed, helpless, unable to endure the conflicting strain.

Well! It may have been so. Certainly few people have been more likely to respond to a mystical influence of this sort than Hilda Lathrop. She was one of those rare persons to whom deepest reality can only come through fellowship with the general experience, whether of joy or pain. Her whole

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nature was passionately athirst for perfection, yet perfection, attained in solitude, was imperfect to her, and her very thirst drove her away from those lonely uplands where pilgrims of the Ideal pass one the other unheeding, rapt in the upward gaze, down to the crowded plains of common life. Every age has known natures so enlarged in consciousness that they live first and most intensely in the movement of the race, of the times, of some special cause seeking its victory on earth: but perhaps in the past we should find such people chiefly among those whom the world calls public characters, its statesmen or preachers or poets. Surely, it is a sign that the spiritual democracy which we long for has really been born among us that there are coming to be many of these natures in private life also. Their suffering is great, — great also their privilege. Because Hilda Lathrop was one of them, certain phases in her experience have seemed worth recording.

The child came naturally by a consciousness sensitive to the larger human need. For her father had been one of those men of the last generation, — a type just then becoming common, — to whom the possession of a pleasure or a beauty unshared was, paradoxically as it seemed to most people, a source of keen suffering. This feeling determined his life. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, living and working by choice in the east end of a great city, and the little Hilda, born in a sordid

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street where the throngs were stifling at night and morning, breathed for the first few years of her life the air of the slum. Her father, on whose life she brooded often in later years, was not an intellectual man. He read little, and thought, so far as words indicate thought, even less. Allegiance to his bishop and loyalty to the principles of the Anglican Church constituted the life of his mind; but the life of his heart reached into the Infinite. It was in caring for the poor through a tenement-house summer, when Hilda was six years old, that he came to his death.

Hilda's mother could never fully love the poor after that. Indeed, perhaps she had never loved them much. She was a finely wrought American girl, sprung from the people, but representing a second generation born in prosperity. Her grandfather had led a pinching life of effort and self-denial; her father had entered with keen relish on the enjoyment of material luxury; it remained for her to seek with equal zest life's choicer and more spiritual joys. She was full of delicate instincts and finest sentiments, a good amateur in painting, ardently religious, — a creature to whom self-culture was a duty, one who made of living an exquisite art.

Isabel Howard's friends had thought her thrown away when she married that rather dull, silent man, Philip Lathrop; but she loved him, with an emotion that idealized rather itself than its object.

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After his death, she immediately took Hilda to the continent: and the child's life, from six to sixteen, was spent in very lovely places, and among quite unworldly people, travelling English and Americans, who made a serious cult of the beautiful. They moved about, these cultured, innocuous, expatriated men and women, in a phantom world of charming memories, perpetuated by charming art. They lived in the light of stars which had long become extinct, — as astronomy teaches us that we may all be doing in a measure, — and their sphere of existence was a sort of dream-limbo, remote from heaven, earth, or hell. Here and there might be met one who had achieved a minor reputation in art or letters, but for the most part they valued appreciation above achievement, and in all their activities they were engaged in reaping a feeble aftermath in the fields where the great harvest of humanity had been garnered long ago.

Mrs. Lathrop was entirely content in this life; but it came to pass that a curious sense of unreality pervaded Hilda's girlhood, as they moved about, drawn by beauty or historic interest or the words of some art critic, as impulse led the way. The girl, who had inherited her mother's artistic gifts, readily acquiesced in the dream that she should become an artist, and studied here and there in a desultory fashion, — but they never settled for long. In all their wanderings, it was the figure of the

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mother which had most enduring importance to the childish eyes, yet even this figure at times lacked actuality. Mrs. Lathrop never knew a more ardent lover than her little daughter. An exquisite charm, indeed, as of one who had known all the seductions of the world and had renounced them, clung around Philip Lathrop's widow. Her daughter in later life, when her eyes seldom rested on beauty, would at times send a docile imagination wandering backward, on the paths which memory opened. She would visit the delicate luxury of the Alhambra, with tropical vegetation around and white peaks shining far away, or would muse among the mighty columns of a Greek temple by the shimmering Sicilian sea. And the centre of the landscape was ever her mother's figure, — slender, dark-robed, wistful, sharing that air of fellowship with the world of dreams, which, to Hilda, great beauty always had.

The little girl knew a happy, though perhaps not a normal, childhood. Painful shyness coöperated with the nomadic conditions of their life to shut her off from intercourse with other children, but the sense of isolation encompassed her not unpleasantly. Her consciousness was filled with high Alpine pastures in blossom, with cathedral aisles and porches, with ruins against blue Italian skies, and the rose-flame of flowering almond-trees. As she grew older, it seemed to her in brooding hours that all which men had suffered and achieved from the dawn of

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history was gathered within her spirit. Owing to avidity in miscellaneous reading, and to sundry experiences of hotel life, the world held, theoretically, few secrets for the girl of fifteen. She had never known love or shame or anguish, and she recognized in these the revelations by which the race enters into knowledge of the Mysteries; but a curious feeling of aloofness, increased by her intention to hold toward life the impersonal attitude of the artist, convinced her that the old road trodden by the feet of passing generations was not for her. Intellect and imagination served as a sort of mirror, reflecting the bewildering phantasmagoria of existence. Hilda was not yet competent to distinguish reflection from reality, and her premature entrance into sympathetic knowledge of the human struggle, while no experience had as yet touched her own being, enhanced the sense of deficient actuality, of insincerity in the very act of living, which slowly awoke in her as time advanced, and continued to torment many years of her youth.

When Hilda was sixteen, Mrs. Lathrop yielded to the entreaties of her relatives and sent her daughter home, to be educated in America. Dreamy Hilda found herself caught up into the midst of a large, energetic, and affectionate family connection.

They all bewildered her, — these men, so kindly in their own families, yet otherwise so frankly ab-

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sorbed in "business" and the newspapers, — these women, with their capitally managed establishments, their literary clubs, their charitable committees, — these girls, of so elastic a vigor, who turned with easy assurance from society to philanthropy, and again to what seemed to Hilda really advanced studies. "The positive, the present;" she was becoming dimly aware of the existence of such things, aware also that her own life bore slight relation to them. She tried to throw herself into her cousins' pursuits, athletic, intellectual, social; but those old enemies, the sense of unreality and of isolation, were, she soon found, neither soothed nor exiled by this new existence preoccupied with personal interests pressing to immediate ends. Rather, they grew, as the months passed on, into a clearly recognized distress. No longer a tranquil inhabitant of her old dreamland, not yet a *dramatis persona* in the play of life around her, she moved on her pilgrim way through a realm of shadows, wondering whether they were not substantial, and she perhaps the shade.

It was during the four years at a woman's college, where, new conditions having obscured for the time her old impulse toward the arts, she now decided to study, that the spell was first in a measure broken, and the keen consciousness of the actual stung her with healthful joy and pain. Not the intellectual activities of the place, though they meant something to her, but the personal relations which it offered,

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brought her this great gift. Here she learned for the first time that individuals can be as exciting as cathedrals. In the presence of her new friends, — vivid young American women, each of whom appeared to her almost extraordinarily interesting, — her old dreaminess vanished, and she felt the pleasure of exploring, not only no longer a distant past but a present full of vistas toward the future. Hers was only the little world as yet, — a world peopled by those few predestined spirits who in some mystery of psychologic law emerged from the wavering throngs encompassing her path, and struck from her nature the electric flash of recognition. The great world lay beyond in the shadows, — that world of all humanity with which as a whole we must enter into conscious relation, would we escape failure in life. "To this greater world," — so wrote Hilda in her Journal many years later, — "To this greater world where true reality awaits us, the little world of persons especially beloved is but the ante-chamber. Certain arid mortals never enter even this ante-chamber of love; many a man and woman linger there, penetrating no further. To a few rare spirits like St. Francis, it is granted to spring at once from the sense-world of careless pleasure into the compelling presence of the greater passion. But the normal path leads us, almost insensibly as life goes on, through the ante-chamber entered in youth into the glory of the temple which is our true abiding-

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place. Personal friendships are the steps to that Altar whereon burns forever the sacrificial flame of devotion to all men."

It was after her college years were over, however, that Hilda entered into the full heritage of her womanhood; and the much-coveted "reality," when it came, brought her pangs so heartrending that she would have fled with gratitude to her old gentle country of reflected emotions. She was summering abroad with her mother when she first met Lawrence Ferguson; for Mrs. Lathrop had yielded to the fatality of temperament, and established herself in a home on the Fiesolan heights. Surely no more enchanting spot could have been found in Europe than the old convent, still known as the Villa of the Blessed Ones; at least, so thought Dorothy Gerard, Hilda's best-beloved college friend, who had come to Italy with her after their graduation. So also evidently thought the young Cambridge fellow, restless, radical, given to paradox, who spent the best energies of his Italian holiday in brooding over the social injustices of England. Day after day, as the heat began to wane, he would climb the hill, sit gazing out over the soft Tuscan plain, and talk to Hilda — while he looked at Dorothy. Talk, not of primitive art nor of historic associations, but of latter-day problems in the great industrial centres, of the wrongs of the workers, the ineptitude of the competitive system, and the keen hopes for a new

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social order in the near future astir in the breasts of his comrades.

Dorothy was well worth looking at. Her dusky loveliness was of that subtle and almost hidden order which gives its every admirer the pleasant illusion that he is the first to discover it. She was a girl who herself mistook the stirrings of sensitive emotions as yet unsatisfied for philosophic depth and spiritual unrest. Her innocent self-deception was shared by all her friends, especially by Hilda. The two had first been drawn together by their common religious sadness, an agnosticism which they could not escape, but which weighed heavily upon them; Hilda would have been amazed indeed to learn that Dorothy's sorrowful questionings arose from indolence as much as from sincerity, and that the unutterable things hinted by her troubled brow and thoughtful, tremulous lips, could never be uttered, — because they were not there.

Both girls listened spell-bound to Lawrence Ferguson. His militant, brilliant socialism, the largeness of his outlook, the moral passion expressing itself rather in satire than in sentiment, were new to them. Wide horizons, as he spoke, opened beyond the far line of the Tuscan hills, even to the City of Brotherhood, distant, alluring, fairer than Florence herself. Hilda, excited, eager, gave him quick response, argument for argument, ideal beyond ideal. Dorothy sat silent, and looked her wonderful look.

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"Do you not think Miss Gerard very beautiful?" asked Hilda softly one evening.

"Beautiful?" responded Ferguson, with a touch of surprise, "I should hardly think she would be called so. That 's the least of it. It 's her mind that strikes one, you know. I never met anybody whose conversation impressed me so much;" his ugly, intelligent face lightened as he spoke.

Despite her admiration for her friend, Hilda was amused; Dorothy, when Ferguson was present, rarely spoke a word. Perhaps the pang which mingled with her amusement revealed something to her; but indeed, Hilda was not a woman to whom self-deception was easy. To love, in a nature like hers, is more significant than to be beloved, and she felt no shame in recognizing that she cared for Ferguson, — only a profound excitement, and, in the beginning, a glad sense of coming to her own. It was the best of the man that stirred her so profoundly; below his surface whims and cynicisms, she perceived a nature more richly dowered with intellectual force and also with large and noble aims than she had ever met before. His presence made the whole world her home, — a substantial, brightly lighted region, seething with glorious possibilities and with bitter needs.

How the story went on from this point can only be guessed; little was ever known, even by Hilda's nearest intimates, in later years, of this which would

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have seemed to the novelist the determining experience of her life. Certain it is that the autumn saw Dorothy and Lawrence betrothed, and that Hilda, through the long summer weeks, had acted as confidant to a very modern and refractory pair of lovers. Ferguson, large-sighted and even dogmatic where broad social issues were concerned, proved a veritable Hamlet in his perplexity as to his own mind. His attraction toward Dorothy, though strong, was at first hardly a compelling force; he would neither woo her nor forget her.

"I think I could give up all hope of winning her, if I were only sure I really loved her," he grumbled ruefully to Hilda.

"If that is your state of mind," she flashed back, intent on her friend's dignity, "you would certainly better go away at once."

But Ferguson would not go away; and Hilda, with perverse resolution and unfailing self-control, bent herself to holding the image of her friend before his eyes; nor was it hard to fix the eyes of any man upon an image so fair. As for Dorothy, that she loved Ferguson had been to her friend an open secret from the first, but had Hilda been less preoccupied with her own tumultuous struggle, she might easily have realized that her friend, stirred and swayed by Ferguson till her emotions all but outran control, yet responded rather to his personal magnetism than to his nature as a whole. In the

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one girl, passion was intense rather than profound, an irresistible, dominating force; in the other, though it penetrated to the very sources of life itself, it was under the stern control of intelligence and of will. Hilda's love for Dorothy had till now been the strongest feeling she had known; she was convinced that her friend's best chance for happiness and peace lay in marriage with Ferguson. She was aware that the man at times gravitated toward herself, and that a little effort on her part, a warmer show of interest, a subtle change in attitude, might have turned the scale. With gayety, sympathetic tact, and unfailing resolution, she kept on her way. What forces impelled her, beside affection for her friend, let those say who understand a character that shrinks from joy as from something alien to its mortal destiny, and feels, it knows not why, that it must work out its fate alone. Perhaps Hilda's sacrifice was a blunder: it would not be the first nor last. Be these things as they may, the lovers by autumn had thrown hesitation and introspection to the winds, and, very much surprised at themselves, were absorbed in ecstasies simple as those of village lad or lass. Hilda was free for the only satisfaction left her to crave, — solitude.

Solitude, but not inaction. If the vociferous Byronic mood is no longer in vogue among unhappy young people, the fashion of a Teufelsdröckh, eating

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out his grim heart in restless silent wanderings, has also passed away. Myriad activities crisply organized, summon us on every side; powerful natures, when the *weltschmerz* of youth grips them, settle on some of these, and stupefy the clamors of sorrow with the whirring of the wheels of work. Such assuredly was Hilda's instinct; she was not a woman to allow her outer energies to be sucked into the dark gulf of pain at the heart of her. During her last year at college, the old attraction toward art study had reawakened: she had decided, to her mother's delight, to enter in the autumn an art school in Paris. This plan she now quietly carried out; the work was hard, healthful, interesting, and she devoted herself to it with all her vigorous vitality. Concerning the inner drama of the years thus spent, no one ever knew much. Modern girls, at least of Hilda's type, consume their own smoke, and no one guesses at the fire within. Through an occasional musing passage in her journal, however, something may be inferred: still more, perhaps, from her long silences. There can be no question that despite her loneliness, the old mist-like sense of being an Undine creature, mysteriously set apart from the common lot, melted at this time, finally and forever, from the shrouded mountains of her soul. She stood henceforth in rugged, substantial humanity, a woman among women: this, almost at once, she recognized as a good, even though her

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spirit-landscape were ever to be, as she then thought, scarred and barren.

"Misery makes no records," we read in the journal.

The next entry some months later: —

"How one seems shut off from life, when shut off from joy! But perhaps this is illusion. I seem to see that denial may be no negation, but the most positive experience life offers."

But again, with swift reaction: —

"Life may open, and close, within three months. Experience is over: remains ghosthood."

She was twenty-five years old when she wrote this. A little later we find an entry in gentler mood: —

"How often I have heard my dear mother say that a sensitive person appreciates life most fully in the absence of primal passions! She has always enjoined economy in emotions, always pointed out that in gray weather one sees the finer, subtler facts in nature, while in bright sunshine one is conscious chiefly of the irradiating light. I used to like that; I tried to keep my consciousness sober and pure, serene enough to receive like calm water the reflections which high winds destroy. . . . Well! I shall have chance enough for a life of half-tones now. No great romance, no commanding passions, no high heroisms, will ever be for me." She showed a friend that passage, laughing, one day many years later.

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"When did the human need become a real thing to you, not a phrase?" some one asked her once.

She hesitated, a shadow crossed her face. But the question came, as she knew, from no idle talker, but from a storm-tossed young mind, and she replied presently with full, grave directness: —

"I can tell you exactly. It was one night in Paris. I was fighting a personal pain, and it was sharp. I had not tried to sleep. The moonlight flooded the city, — a waning moon, near dawn. I rested my arms on my window-sill, and looked up at the towers of Notre Dame. You remember the great demon who leans on the parapet, looking out over the city? I felt a hunger for companionship with him, and I sent a whisper floating up to the face of that mighty cliff, wrought by human hands: 'I suffer,' I said to the demon; and I thought I heard his answer: 'I have seen others,' he said.

Then somehow I began brooding on all that he had seen, and on the pain of that great place. I let my mind wander through house after house, street after street, till it had explored the whole city. I seemed to hear the moaning tide of human misery surging back and forth. And slowly, I can hardly explain how, I became aware how little, in all that city full of sorrow, sprang from the source that had been most grievous to me, — the clamor of the heart, the cry of life denied. Large, unrecorded, unromantic griefs pressed close to my spirit;

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poverty, debt, sickness, — sin. And all of a sudden it came to me that suffering of the kind that made me keep my vigil was a luxury which only the prosperous could afford. Of the wider, the more basal facts of actual human life, I knew nothing.

"A memory flashed across me then," Hilda went on with a slight tremble in the voice: "it showed me a rude crucifix, high in the Tyrol Alps. I was suddenly shocked to feel how far was my selfish pain from that great Sorrow. I felt exiled, and my sense of exile added a new pang to my grief. An unspeakable longing seized me to draw near to the sorrowing heart of the world, that so — " She broke off there. She was always a reticent woman in religious matters.

She resumed in a moment, with a tone buoyant, though low.

"That was really the opening of a new life to me. For the sense came then in the midst of present pain of a long journey yet to travel, — of unknown regions to explore in which my very hurt had given me the right of way. I was very wretched still, but I had the instinct that my wretchedness was not an end but a beginning."

Surely, it was a woman of valiant nature who thus, in her own extremity, fled to the sad heart of humanity, and found, if not comfort, yet enlargement of spirit, as she rested there. But with all her philosophy, — which was as much, perhaps, as

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mortal ever exercised in presence of an unrequited love, — Hilda Lathrop would have been amazed to learn that this so absorbing experience of love and loss was only the prelude to the real drama of her existence, — a clearing the way for the entrance of those larger interests which were to control her strongest years, and make them full and rich beyond her childish dreamings. Yet so it was to be, — and so it is with many a man, yes, with many a woman, even, — romancers to the contrary notwithstanding. But her true life she was not to discover yet, though some prefiguring of it fell upon her, as from a cloud filled with sunlight before sunrise, while her pride in separation yielded to a longing for fellowship as she brooded that night in her misery over the city lit with the waning moon.

Meanwhile, apart from that gnawing centre of personal pain, she was not satisfied. Hers was one of those common, yet difficult cases, in which vitality is stronger than vocation. As the fierce craving for the anodyne activity which marks the earlier phases of a sorrow slowly lessened, she became aware of other summoning voices calling her, clearly as that of the Spirit of Art. One was the Voice of Learning; Hilda's father's father had been a college president, and the girl had found herself from the first curiously at home in the academic world. The other Voice was that to which Lawrence Ferguson had first quickened her hearing, — the Voice

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of Justice, crying aloud unheeded in the modern streets.

Ferguson, after his marriage, had thrown himself with renewed energy into the socialist agitation active in England during the latter part of the last century; and Dorothy's letters — slightly wistful, Hilda thought, despite her evident happiness — kept her friend in touch with the excitements of their stimulating days. Partly under the inspiration of these letters, Hilda, during vacations at home, became aware of her own country from a new point of view. A passion of patriotism, such as she had never dreamed of, overswept her spirit, — that tingling love, that loyalty, almost a pain, which America can quicken in its children. The ideal in which our republic was founded became to her almost a mystic Presence, guiding her days. But in her last vacation, passed at home in the beautiful house of her cousins, the Howard Browns, contrasts struck sharp upon her spirit, for by some inner compulsion she spent her free hours in long walks through the tenement-house districts, watching Poverty from afar. Those were the early times of the college settlement movement. At the close of her holiday, Hilda learned, too late for more than one or two calls, that a settlement house had been open for a year or two in the region through which she loved to wander.

No one but the girl herself was surprised when,

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toward the close of her last year of art study, a new chair just founded for the study of the arts was offered her at her Alma Mater. Her peculiar education, her college record, her Parisian studies, all pointed to her as a suitable person for such a professorship. Friends urged acceptance, college authorities almost assumed it; the voices of learning and of art joined in a friendly duet of invitation. But Hilda delayed her answer. As soon as her work ended in Paris, she betook herself to Italy, and, before seeking Fiesole and her mother, went straight to the little hill-town of Assisi, which, absorbed in memories, smiles from the slopes of its brown Apennine over the Umbrian plain.

Here in Assisi, Hilda stayed a week, communing with her own mind alone, and with the spirits of men long vanished. Her mornings were spent in the church where art in its glorious prime has painted the spiritual triumph of the Little Poor Man. Pacing gravely up and down, the woman of these latter days scanned the naïve frescoes: Francis flinging his garments in his father's face with high, uplifted gesture; Francis preaching to the birds, receiving the stigmata, or pleading before a troubled, worldly, yet conscientious pope the cause of lawlessness, poverty, and love. Noon always found her beneath the vaulted shadows of the lower church, where the august presences of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, hovering above the high

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altar, gleam softly through the dusky air. In the afternoons, she would wander through the fair land sanctified by the feet of Francis and his first companions, a land still haunted by echoes of their low song of brotherhood, though all the tumults it has listened to have long been hushed. A strange light-heartedness was vouchsafed in these days to the young American pilgrim; again and again, in some green lane bordered with star-of-Bethlehem and wild gladiolus, beneath the olives, she would pause, her face upturned as if listening, catching it may be sweet fragments of the Canticle of the Sun among the murmuring hedgerows. Her feeling for Umbria is hinted in a sonnet, found among her papers, and doubtless written at this time: —

Thou art a holy poem, sweet Umbrian plain,
 Forever sung in the angelic ear:
 Thy tender vines beneath the hills austere,
Thy shining poppies and thy springing grain
All murmur softly one melodious strain,
 While Brother Wind breathes slow that he may hear,
 And floating o'er the far horizons clear,
Our sister clouds hearken the glad refrain:

A poem of love remembered: day by day,
 Here, with some chosen brother of his band,
God's Little Poor One wandered, lorn and gay,
Weeping, yet singing on his homeless way
 Lauds of the creatures: and the lovely land
 Still holds his voice for those who understand.

So passed the days, and on an evening in early June Hilda sat by her high window overlooking

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the wide amethyst of plain and sky, and wrote two letters. One was to the trustees of the college, declining their offer; the other to the head worker of Langley House, applying for residence during the coming year. When they were finished, she drew a long breath. The next day found her at Fiesole.

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CHAPTER II

HOMEWARD BOUND

"DAUGHTER, I do not think that you should leave me."

The words were spoken by Mrs. Lathrop's eyes, — not by her lips, which rested motionless in their pathetic curves. The lady sat in the open loggia of her Fiesolan villa, gazing out, like a modern St. Monica, over the Tuscan landscape that lay gleaming like a world of exquisite memories, below her in the sunset. Duomo and Campanile rose pearly-fair from the hill-girdled plain; the far Carrara Mountains shone clear-cut, like the gems they are, against a golden sky.

Hilda was nestled at her mother's feet. "Did I ever tell you," she asked softly, "what little Alice said when she first saw the sunset from our loggia? She nestled close, and whispered, 'Cousin Hilda, I think God allowed Fra Angelico to paint that sky.'"

Mrs. Lathrop smiled, and in a moment said caressingly, "Even if you don't mind leaving me, I don't see how you can bear to leave all this. Dear, don't be restless. Settle down here with me, and be an artist in Florence. It was always your dream."

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Hilda unlaced her fingers, which were entwined with her mother's, and sat up straight, with an abrupt gesture: "Well, madonna," she said with a sigh, "let 's talk it out."

Mrs. Lathrop suppressed a tiny shiver, and did not answer. The girl's quick movements always gave her a series of slight nervous shocks. She cherished her daughter, but she was quite as happy when Hilda was not in the same room with her, and Hilda knew it.

"So far as leaving you goes," Hilda went on presently, "you won't be alone. Katherine will love to spend the winter with you. And you know you like her ways."

"I was n't thinking of myself, Hilda;" Mrs. Lathrop's low voice had a note of veiled reproach; "moreover, I have my memories, and you know I believe that those who live spiritually can dispense with the material presence of their dear ones."

"Yes, I know," said Hilda wistfully; she was a very human person, and she sometimes felt lonely with this ethereal mother of hers.

"I would n't protest," Mrs. Lathrop went on, "if you insisted on accepting the offer from your college. I realize that the offer is an honor, although I would rather that you stayed in Italy. But as for this new notion, — that my little artist should bury herself in an American slum, among vulgarity and filth and shocking speech — "

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"I've already told you, carina," — Hilda spoke with unnecessary emphasis, — "that Lincoln Street is not a slum. Respectable and honest people live there. They work with their hands, and pay their own way, which is more than ever I did."

"All the worse, dear; there may be a passionate picturesqueness about a slum. I remember a water-color of an old fruit-vendor seen by torchlight in the Bowery which I should like you to have done. But as for your Lincoln Street, I see neither what you can take from it nor what you can bring to it. It must be a sort of wilderness, only lacking the thrill of the illimitable."

"'The City Wilderness,' — yes;" mused Hilda. "It seems illimitable enough in summer, when you can't walk without treading on babies."

"My dear child, you can't live in such a place without destroying the harmony of your nature."

"I have never felt that my nature had attained harmony, madonna," the girl remarked quietly.

"None of us attain harmony, Hilda, but we can aim at it." Mrs. Lathrop was in her element now, and her voice vibrated with appealing undertones. "No matter how carefully we order the scenery of the soul, the jarring note intrudes. The exquisite life is the life that knows what to reject; art is the best help in the process of selection, yet even art disappoints. But we must do our best. What the world needs, in this hurrying, unbeauti-

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ful, democratic age, is people who have made their souls the abode of beauty. To do this, must they not dwell with beauty? 'Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things.' "

Mrs. Lathrop, like most of us, practised a fine eclecticism in her quotations from Scripture. She roused herself now to a tone of decision.

"You know I have never used authority with you, daughter, and I shall not do so now. But you shall never enter that life with my approval. Your health," she concluded, feeling the silence tense with opposition, — "your health will not stand it for a year. You have no moral right to injure your health, my darling."

Hilda glanced abstractedly into the open room behind the loggia. The sky was fading; the gold of the heavens was paling into silver, but the westering light illumined dimly the pictures within. There were three martyrdoms hanging on the walls.

"Ah, look at the sky," murmured Mrs. Lathrop after an instant; "I had almost said listen! That light is like sweet music heard at a distance!"

"Our American skies are clearer, and just as beautiful," remarked Hilda.

Mrs. Lathrop shook her graceful head. "They can't be," she rejoined; "they do not bend over Tuscany. The earth beneath them is without significance."

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"Oh, carina, carina," cried Hilda, laughing, "has n't anything significance till it is dead?" And Mrs. Lathrop laughed a little herself.

"But I mean it," she persisted. "How did you ever come to be so American, Hilda? You 've forgotten, with all the rest of that turbulent civilization, that life at its best means harmony and peace."

"Life means action," said the girl.

Mrs. Lathrop sighed. "'Sound and fury, signifying nothing,' the activities of the modern world seem to me. What is its feverish materialism accomplishing? A few hundred years, and its cheap monuments will have perished from the face of the earth."

"You know I recoil from the materialism and cheapness of modern life as much as you do," returned Hilda, "but I can't fight them at arms' length."

"One fights such things best by evading them," rejoined her mother. "This latter-day passion for improving the physical condition of the poor, — what is it but part of the general discouraging emphasis placed on external conditions? Your reformers are simply one product of what they dislike; the true secret is n't theirs, — and I must say, I don't love them. That young Ferguson, for instance, who used to come here, — what a terrible person he was! Dorothy Gerard was quite thrown away on him!"

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"Dorothy looks at life much as you do," replied Hilda evenly. "Her husband wants her to join him in the socialist propaganda, and she hates it; she wants to absorb herself in him and the children."

"I'm glad at least that you haven't married an agitator," reflected Mrs. Lathrop.

"One wanted to marry me in Paris," laughed Hilda. "He was a Polish Jew student, with oily hair. I didn't mind the Pole or the Jew, but the hair was too much for me. Aren't you glad it was oily, madonna?"

Her mother smiled faintly, and a little silence fell while Hilda pondered how to draw the sweet woman beside her into sympathy with her new impulses.

"Mamma," said she softly, after a moment, "I wish you would tell me more about your life with my father. I think about it a great deal, and you never speak of it."

"You can understand, dear, that it is a very sad memory for me."

"Yes, of course; but it is the memory of your greatest happiness, too," mused Hilda, passing from speech into thought. She did not recognize that Mrs. Lathrop possessed the temperament which takes more satisfaction in dwelling on a vanished love than in the strong active experience of present feeling; yet indeed there were traits in Hilda herself akin to this instinct of her mother's.

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"But tell me, you helped in his work? You went about among the people?"

"To help him was my highest privilege; but I tried to do it chiefly by making a lovely home to which he could return. I wanted to bring him refreshment. Our rooms were in a dreadful hideous street: but I shut the street out as well as I could with the draperies. I had good colors around us. They were very charming, — our rooms."

"He enjoyed them?"

"Oh, I am sure of it. I made a careful study of his tastes. Then I always had a song for him when he came back, or a bit of poetry, — but your father did not care much for poetry, Hilda, not even religious poetry. You are like me there. I dressed for him as if we were uptown. He used to wish to talk a great deal of his 'cases,' his work, but I never encouraged that. I felt he so needed relief. I used to love to help him about the service, though. We had a very beautiful service, dear. And he started the Early Celebration, which was quite right, of course, though only one or two ever went beside me."

"I suppose you never had the people come into your pretty rooms?"

"The neighbors? Oh, no!"

"Mother, tell me about myself then. It seems strange to think that I was there."

"My precious wee girlie! Your hair was a little

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curly fuzz all over your head, and your big hazel eyes — "

"Yes, I know all that. I know I was pretty, and I know I've been an awful disappointment since. But I mean, — did I get out into the street? Did I see things?"

A little frown gathered in Mrs. Lathrop's eyebrows. "Your father used to trouble me rather," she said; "he would take you out sometimes when he went visiting. He said your golden head did more than his talking, to bring people to church. But when you were about four years old I took a stand. I said you were getting older, you were quick to notice, and your little white soul should not be soiled by contact with these hideous things. He looked sad, and he sighed, — dear Philip! he sighed often, — but he said he understood, and I might be right."

"But I did see. There were things out of our window, were n't there, sometimes?"

Mrs. Lathrop bowed in pained silence.

"I remember; — I was a tiny girl, my head just came above the sill; I was playing with the rose-colored curtains, — were n't our curtains rose-color?"

"Not quite; soft salmon-pink."

"And between them I saw a fight. The littlest one got hurt. There was red on the sidewalk. It was sunset, and you were singing a twilight hymn

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at the piano. The very next thing I remember, father must have died, and we were travelling in a red sunset over the Campagna."

"My poor darling! But I tried just as hard as I could, as I have tried ever since, to keep you away from brutal, terrible things, to let my child's spirit dwell in the ideal."

"Dear mamma!" The chill was falling, and the two women rose, and moved into the wide room opening from the loggia, — the old refectory of the convent, subtly retouched by Mrs. Lathrop's taste till it seemed full of a grave and silent beauty gathered from many lands. The dominant types were those of the early Italian Renascence, but Dürer's Melancholia consorted in friendly fashion with Hilda's copies from Mantegna, Watt's Galahad rode forth upon his quest of the Holy Thing opposite the Marriage of Francis and Poverty, and to the observant eye the most carefully placed object in the room was a small gray model of a cross from Iona. One of the things in which Mrs. Lathrop had trained her little daughter from childhood had been the power to carry sensitive instinct along line after line of the self-realization of humanity through the ages, till one's consciousness gathered all human experience into itself. She liked to say that the room of any cultivated person presented a summary of much in the achievement of the race; and little Hilda, holding in her hand the figure of a maiden from

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Tanagra who had danced her dainty way down the centuries, of a minute Buddha in ivory, or a strange-hued Indian basket, would listen spellbound to her mother's voice, while the civilizations of the past arose from their buried life in her bosom. From this special room, however, all oriental and classic suggestions were excluded.

"Tell me, madonna," — said Hilda, as they entered, but her words were cut off.

"Am I too late for a cup of coffee?" said a cheery masculine voice behind them.

The young moonlight touched the waving gray hair of a tall vigorous man, with a little stoop, who stood in the doorway. Mr. Stuart, the artist, had been Hilda's earliest teacher and her mother's oldest friend in Florence, and both women loved him well.

"I supped in the studio and stayed there till the light faded," he went on with the tones of a man masterful and well-content; "then your cool hillside summoned me. My dear Hilda — where are you? — welcome back to Florence. Let an old friend congratulate you. I saw your angel on exhibition here last winter before it went to Brenton."

"Did you like it?" asked Hilda eagerly, standing very slim before him; this had been the first and only picture she had exhibited.

"M — mm — good handling in the wings,"

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replied Mr. Stuart briefly; and Hilda, in some ways more sensitive than her mother, realized that the picture was a failure. Her face fell; the wee silver crescent in the west was no fairy world of promise, but a dead planet mourning its burnt-out fires.

"Ah, was n't it a lovely thing?" said Mrs. Lathrop. "And now, do you know what the child is planning? She means to throw it all up, — her art, her prospects, — and go to live in a settlement, among wretched poor people, organizing trades-unions and washing dirty children and all that kind of thing. I 'm so glad you 've come to help me dissuade her. Just fancy Hilda in that kind of life! Good-bye to art, good-bye to quiet!"

"Art and quiet are n't exactly synonyms, are they, Hilda?" smiled Mr. Stuart placidly; "I fancy, so far as that goes, that it might be a good deal more peaceful thing to wash dirty faces than to try to paint them."

"I 'm going to get you some coffee," — Hilda smiled gratefully on the threshold; "it is n't a bit too late."

"What does this freak mean?" asked Mr. Stuart abruptly, as the girl disappeared. "Is it because her picture was not a success?"

"But it was a success!" Mrs. Lathrop cried; — "everybody praised it!"

Stuart shook his head. "Illustrative sort of

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thing, — taking sentiment. Hilda knows as well as I that she has n't hit it right. She has talent, but she has n't found herself yet."

"All the more reason why she should n't waste time on this new fad."

"Exactly; although between ourselves, dear lady, I'm not sure if the child will ever work herself clear. She has absorbed almost too much, — if you understand me, — and she thinks too much; I suppose she can't help it. She certainly showed artistic power when she was a little thing: what an eye she had for design! Her real line ought to be handicraft, I imagine, but we're all going in for 'Igh Art or nothing, to-day, — more 's the pity. Well, child, what 's this new scheme?"

"Oh, master mio, I can't talk about it," returned Hilda, talking with more sense of freedom than to her mother; "I suppose I'm restless. But you have n't any idea how ghost-like the beauty of this place seems to me after New York. And I seem to 'hanker,' as my Yankee cousins would say, after New York, — after reality."

"Was n't there enough reality for you in Paris, in Fouchet's studio?" enquired Stuart dryly; "I should think 'the God of things as they are' presided in that spot fast enough."

"It was strenuous, — it was superb," returned Hilda; "but I don't want art any longer: I want life."

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"Do you dare to oppose art to life?" exclaimed Mr. Stuart, putting down his coffee untasted, and standing in his whole erect height beside her.

"Yes," said Hilda, with spirit; "and so would you if you walked down the Bowery."

"Art," — the leonine figure rose into the shadows above the faint glow of the Roman lamps, and the voice had almost a mystic sound, — "art is life set free, for it is life revealed. Dedicate yourself to art, not in a freak of amateur sentiment, but soberly and truly, you dedicate yourself to fact. You 've not found that out yet; that picture of yours fails because it has n't got enough fact in it. Is that a reason for giving up? Not a bit! You have the artist's power. I don't know yet just what you can do with it; but the gift you have, and in our guild you belong, and if you leave your proper place to meddle with what does n't concern you, you 'll rue it. You are sent into this world, my dear child," — Mr. Stuart was by this time tranquilly sipping his coffee, — "not to re-create or to reform it, but to reproduce it. Good-bye. No, not another cup, thank you." His crisp footsteps were already on the threshold when he turned, the massive head appearing once more in dark outline against the sky.

"I should think from what I know," he ended sententiously, "that that American democracy of yours needed art a good deal more than it does

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philanthropy just now. Stick to the truth of your own nature, in any case, and you 'll give the world what it needs."

He was really gone, this time, leaving mother and daughter laughing gently.

"Is n't he refreshing?" said Hilda. "All the same, I repeat that he never walked down the Bowery."

"I think he sees deeper than you, Hilda," returned Mrs. Lathrop, moving as if to leave the room. But Hilda laid a detaining touch on her mother's arm.

"Madonna;" she spoke with effort, her glance seeking the pictures on the wall, while Mrs. Lathrop waited with drooping, tender patience; "what do all these pictures mean to you? Why did you choose that Giotto for me to copy?"

"For the rare tactile values, dear —"

"Now, carina, don't try to talk that new jargon. You know as well as I do that you — that we — chose those pictures for their Christian sentiment."

"It is n't that I do not care for other art, Hilda." Mrs. Lathrop spoke again almost with energy, savoring her words on a subject dear to her: "If I were rich, if I had a big house, like — like — Cousin Howard," — she hesitated, flushed, and laughed a little at the name, — "I should dedicate different rooms to different types of beauty. But when one

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has only a little, one has to choose. I can't bear a room that is a jumble. And if you must select, why, Christian art is the most expressive."

Hilda's spirit was bruised and tense. Through the sympathetic enjoyment which always bound her to her mother's mind, she felt a sharp severance in attitude, conviction, and aim. She was suffering, though excitement made her unconscious of her pain.

"Mother," she said, "you have always tried, as you say, to keep our eyes away from painful and ugly things. You wish to live withdrawn in a spiritual atmosphere of harmony, and you think you do this best by surrounding yourself with artistic beauty. But the life behind, the life which the art of your choice represents, is full of struggle and agony. See! The angels, bending over the Baby in the Botticelli Madonna, carry the instruments of the Passion; and the Predella has the Scourging for its subject. Look at the face of Giotto's Poverty! — even those gleeful cherubs in Vincenzo da Catena's S. Christina are playing with the millstone of her martyrdom. And — the Crucifix hangs above your bed, mother."

Mrs. Lathrop was gazing, rapt, into the twilight.

"The supreme triumph of harmony is when it claims all disorder for its own," she murmured. "The supreme peace is the peace that includes all

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pain. And so the supreme religion is the religion of the Cross."

Hilda hesitated a moment.

"Then, — let me go to Lincoln Street. I suppose," she added, trying to smile, after a moment, "that you will hardly carry your opposition to me so far as S. Francis's father carried his."

It was hard to speak. The influences of the Church of England, which had surrounded her from childhood, had fallen upon a temperament sensitive but sceptical. Long ago, her curious, girlish pride, in superiority to spiritual struggle, had yielded to intense yearning after the faith of the humble, just as her feeling of aloofness from the common experiences of men had given place to a controlling desire for fellowship with their distress and joy. But at twenty-eight, she was still a seeker. To announce, or even to recognize inwardly, that her decision to live among the poor was affected by Christian motives, was all but impossible to Hilda. Moreover, the suggestion that this decision involved sacrifice seemed repugnant and even unreal. But she and her mother seemed to have changed positions, and a simple instinct of logic led her to point out what she felt that Mrs. Lathrop should have been the first to say.

There was a pause, during which the mother bent delicate, serious brows upon her daughter's flushed face.

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"My darling," she said at last; "you know that I respect your reserve in religious matters; but you know also that your lack of faith is a constant grief to me. How can I bear to see you plunge into a life where I am sure that you can never find the light?".

"If I am ever to find it," Hilda answered, speaking slowly to control her voice, "it will be not by trying to hypnotize myself with beauty and sentiment, but by serving the democracy which is trying to translate the will of Christ into the terms of social life."

Mrs. Lathrop laid her hand on her daughter's. "You are under a delusion," she said firmly. "Democracy and Christianity are not synonyms. As has well been said, three Christian words oppose the false formula, liberty, equality, fraternity. They are obedience, hierarchy, service. Look at facts, Hilda. Watch France, and deny me if you can. He who would be loyal to Christianity must be loyal to the dying tradition of social order and stability. I see you preparing to throw in your lot with the forces of disorder, materialism, and unrest. For your own soul's health, I bid you pause. The interior life is the only reality. To live in the spirit today," — Mrs. Lathrop was in deep earnest, — "one must withdraw from the push and roar and false theories of modern life; one must listen to the voices that speak in silence. How can you expect to hear

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those voices in Lincoln Street? How can you hope to be visited there by the Holy Vision?"

"Don't, mother!" Hilda had sprung to her feet. "You remind me so of Cousin Howard!"

Mrs. Lathrop almost started. Cousin Howard, highly prosperous, highly respectable, highly religious, was also highly Philistine.

"When I was there last year," continued Hilda, "we got into a great discussion. It was one Sunday at dinner, and I had spent the morning visiting the university settlement. He had just come from church, from communion, I think. 'I should think it would make you very uncomfortable to see all those rough sights, my dear,' he said; 'you would much better have come to church with me.' I could not help answering, 'I suppose Christ sometimes felt uncomfortable, Cousin Howard, when He saw the lepers, for example.' And he replied to me, 'Yes, but Christ became uncomfortable that we might be comfortable.' Mother, it has seemed to me ever since that those words sum up very much of the Christianity around us."

Mrs. Lathrop held a grieved silence, and made no attempt to point out the lack of justice in her daughter's outburst. Both speakers, in truth, were getting weary. Their thoughts struck out into the wide and unexplored regions of personality that lie beyond speech, and wandered there. They could have talked on for years, seeking each the other, but it

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would all have been in vain, for the voices would have come from an increasing distance, sounding more and more remote to the ear of the soul, while still near to the ear of flesh. It was time to make an end.

"It 's no use, madonna;" Hilda caressed the soft curves of the pretty hair, touched lightly to silver. "I 'm Italian by sentiment, like you, but by choice and conviction I am hopelessly American, as you say. Now you are not to worry. One fares very comfortably at Langley House, and you don't know what clever people one meets. I 'll carry all my Burne-Jones down with me; Mr. Stuart won't like that, he despises Burne-Jones. And oh, mother, mother, don't you see? Democracy inspires you with distaste and distrust; it inspires me with unspeakable loyalty. It is cleanly, wholesome, invigorating, and unfulfilled. I must share its fortunes, be part of life in the making. Of course I shall miss beauty, but I shall find significance; and you know I always cared for significance more even in art."

Mrs. Lathrop, in spite of herself, yielded a little to her daughter's enthusiasm. "Of course it will be a great enlargement for Katherine to go to Egypt with me," she said, stroking Hilda's hand.

The next morning, a sonnet in Hilda's handwriting was on her breakfast-tray: —

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From all the restful silences that reach
 O'er Alpine pastures fair, from shadows cast,
 Lovely and still, by passionate life long past,
Smiling and hushed in mystic memories each, —
From these I turn me: toward the beckoning beach
 Of Western seas I turn; what uproar vast
 Is borne across the ocean on the blast? —
Traffic, and hurrying throngs, and noisy speech!
Wildered I hearken; back I fain would flee, —
 When list! A siren strain, compelling, low,
 Breathes through the tumult: onward must I go!
For in faint undertones of melody
 Through those contentious discords clear doth flow
The music of a freedom that shall be.

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CHAPTER III

THE ACADEMIC MIND

HALF a dozen members of the college faculty sat together on the broad steps of a gray stone building in the September evening. It was a serious little group of people, all of them intimate with the ardent if austere delights of the intellectual life. In their more social moods, they sought recreation, for the most part, in tossing problems lightly from mind to mind. Not that they lacked more concrete topics of conversation: the academic life itself was keenly interesting to them, and curiosity concerning its reactions and a lively enjoyment of paradox relieved the even movement of their days. Finally, if subjects ever ran short, they could always fall back on discussion of one another.

Just now, the most interesting figure on their horizon was Hilda Lathrop. The girl had been a marked person from the day of her coming among them, and when the new professorship in the arts was offered to her, they were filled with pleased content. All the more grievous was their disappointment and disapproval when they learned that she had declined the position.

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"Still, you can't blame her for wanting to stay in Florence," said the professor of literature; "who would n't prefer Tuscany to America if he had the chance?"

"Not I," returned the assistant professor of mathematics.

"But Miss Lathrop is coming home," — the speaker, Henrietta Morse, instructor in economics, was a classmate of Hilda's; — "she means to spend the winter at Langley House, the new social settlement in Brenton."

A buzz of enquiry followed. "This is what she writes," said Miss Morse: "'I feel strongly that I am going into this life as a representative of the college. If the academic activity of America is not to perish in sterile class isolation, it must extend itself to the people at large and pour forth its treasures on the great throngs of the disinherited.'"

There was a puzzled silence, broken by a voice from the outskirts of the group. "Those settlements are good things," said the speaker.

"Do you think so?" returned the professor of philosophy. "They seem to me based on our common American fallacy that you can improve the quality of a product by diluting it. In these days of Chautauqua, and so on, I should think that our business was rather to protect than to extend the tradition of the intellectual life."

"It is funny to think of Hilda exposing the

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denizens of the slums to Botticelli," laughed a curly-haired young instructor.

"I read of a London cabby the other day" — this was the professor of literature — "who remarked to his fare, — 'Do you prefer Hossian or 'Omer, sor? I'm for Hossian myself, there's so much nater to 'im.'"

"I believe in settlements," said Miss Morse; "they are going to be invaluable stations for laboratory work in sociology. But I don't think I believe in them for Hilda Lathrop. She has had no training in economics."

"As I remember Miss Lathrop, she was a very exclusive young person," reflected the professor of philosophy; "there's a certain humor in her devoting herself to the democracy."

"Hilda was n't exactly exclusive," hesitated Henrietta Morse; "she had a sort of gift of blindness; there were a great many people she never saw."

Everybody laughed; and the assistant professor of mathematics spoke out. "For my part," said she, "I am quite willing that our nice average girls of domestic tastes should go into a settlement for a few months, or even longer. Philanthropy is a capital solution of life for women who are not afflicted with brains, and who don't marry. But that Hilda Lathrop, with her unconsciously aristocratic instincts and her vigorous mind, should go into that kind of

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thing is a peculiarly crooked twist in the kinky weaving of the Moirai."

So they discussed her among themselves, lightly and critically, as was their wont. But now the girl herself was with them once more, — a little silent, yet with the old combination of dignity and eagerness that had always distinguished her. She had agreed to spend a few weeks at the college, helping in the arrangement of the embryonic art collections, and this was her first evening with her old friends.

The hill broke away at their feet in its natural forest wildness, but the trees opened to show a winding avenue below, and a glimpse of moonlit river beyond the wide sweep of the campus. To the left, the myriad lights of College Hall began to kindle. The sight had never ceased to move Hilda from her freshman year; it moved her now.

Silence, after half an hour of reminiscent talk, had fallen on the little group; but presently a deep, musical, grieving voice made itself heard through the shadows. It belonged to Miss Brooks, the professor of biology.

"Hilda," said the voice slowly, "will you tell us now exactly why you declined the offer of the trustees?"

Hilda drew a deep breath; she had known this was coming.

"Because I wanted to spend the winter in Langley

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House," she answered, with a little tremble in her clear voice.

"Do you think," — she turned desperately to the professor of biology after a long pause in which no one spoke, — "do you think that I am a fatuous person?"

The professor of biology, who was a courteous woman, made a deprecating gesture. Being also a bluntly honest woman, however, she remained silent, for that was just what she did think. Her surprising candor and her severity in the classroom caused the crude majority of her students to detest Miss Brooks, the fine minority to delight in her. Hilda, in college, had belonged to the minority, and now, returning as an older woman, she found even more than her former zest in companionship with the noble intellectual ardor and large personality of her friend. The whole atmosphere of the college, indeed, was grateful to her; its unworldliness, the strength of its communal interests, the simplicity of life, and the spirit of intellectual democracy that prevailed. She remembered the great life-communicating movements which again and again, proceeding from the historic universities, — those centres where past and future meet, — had stirred society to new endeavors. Might not such a movement start from the colleges for women, as well as from Oxford, from Paris? And of what order ought this living force to be, and whither should it flow? It was a democracy under

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whose fostering care these new privileges had been offered to the women of the new age, and the ideal of democracy made answer. Something of all this she had wanted to say to her friends, hoping for their sympathy. But perhaps she had not allowed enough for the keen disappointment with which they had learned her decision to leave them. At all events, she felt in the air the nipping touch of disapproval.

"I seem fatuous to you?" she repeated at last.

The professor of biology kept silence; but the assistant professor of mathematics spoke briskly. "Not fatuous, — only misguided," she said.

"Who has misled me?" queried Hilda; "I have had no teachers but you. — I always wanted to be claimed, but the master of thought I sought, I have never found."

"You are misled by your instincts of a woman," returned the other with good cheer; "any woman feels restless unless she is taking care of somebody. You have no one near you who needs taking care of, so you want to take care of the poor."

"Not at all," said Hilda perversely. "I want the poor to take care of me."

"What do you mean, Hilda?" asked the curly-haired instructor; but Hilda did not explain.

"Of course," — Miss Brooks was speaking at last, slowly, yet abruptly, — "I understand the impulse which drives you. The scholar can no longer live in

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the seclusion once dear to him. The modern world is one great whispering-gallery, and the wailings that rise from civilization sound insistently in our ears. I — hear — them " — the voice was deeper, lower, — " but," Miss Brooks went on with decision, " it is weak to listen. To allow one's self to be incapacitated for the honest work that one is best fitted to do by a morbid compassion for suffering that one cannot relieve is a temptation of these latter days. It would not assail an ignoble nature; it presses the sensitive hard."

" Dear Miss Brooks," cried Hilda eagerly, " I do hope I am not narrow. I 'm proud of your Summa," — Miss Brooks had lately received high honors from a foreign university for a dissertation on the eye of a fossil snail, — " and yet " — the girl faltered — " I confess it is almost as strange to me to see people to-day devoting themselves with quiet minds to abstract studies as it would be were we in a state of visible siege."

" Well! Don't you admire Archimedes pursuing his geometry when the foe was at the door? " This was the professor of philosophy, a woman of worn, sensitive face, who spoke with a little gasping laugh.

" Archimedes was n't a soldier."

" Neither are we soldiers. That is just what Dr. Brooks means, is n't it? " Henrietta Morse, the instructor in economics, who was speaking, turned

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with pretty deference toward the older woman. "There are different vocations, and not every one is called to serve in the army of reform. The social question has vexed the wisest for more than one generation: it will continue to vex them long after our day is over. Meanwhile, the great normal activities of the world must not be suspended: scholars and poets and artists must fulfil the law of their being. Hilda," — her gentle hesitation grew more marked, — "may it not be that you are making a mistake in refusing a position here?"

The low question reached Hilda's ear in clamorous iteration, put by every mind present. She remained silent.

"Amateurs," said the professor of mathematics with some sharpness, — "amateurs and fanatics are getting social problems into a bigger mess every day. The only thing for us to do is to clear the path for the specialists. Endow your chairs of sociology and your labor-bureaus, and keep your hands off."

"There are few things," mourned Miss Brooks, "more saddening to me, and, I may add, more annoying, than that modern bigotry which inspires a certain class of social enthusiasts nowadays with impatient contempt for the rest of the world."

"Ah me," said Henrietta Morse; "I see the other side. I have an immense sympathy with reform agitation; with the people who think that if

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they poke the ground hard enough with their sticks, they will hurry the rotation of the globe. They make me feel compassion, not annoyance. One stick is called Single Tax, and another Free Silver, and another Municipal Socialism, and they are often sharp sticks enough, but — the earth won't be hurried by poking. It moves, but in obedience to laws beyond our reach. So does the industrial system."

"I never expected to change the industrial system, Henrietta," Hilda responded with a sigh, "and I 'm not aware of bigotry. It is dreadfully hard for me to talk; I am feeling my way, and all the rest of you seem settled. One thing I am sure of, though: — that this matter can't be left to the specialists."

"What do you mean by 'this matter'?" complained the professor of mathematics.

"I mean the mode of life of the majority of the working-people at this moment," returned Hilda. "Is that definite enough?"

That there could be any connection between her peaceful existence of sines and equations and the life of the working-people was an idea out of the mental range of the professor. She was silent in pure scorn, and Hilda went on: —

"We can't stand aside while experts investigate the laws which determine the lives of our fellows, as if those laws affected inanimate substances. Whatever they be, they are the expression of conditions which we help to produce; they affect lives

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which we control. Few of us are theological experts, yet we all have to have some kind of religion and try to act on it. It is with the science of our relations to men as with the science of our relations to — the Beyond. Every human being is bound to adopt a definite attitude toward social theories, to take some definite share in social activities: not because he is a specialist, but because he is a man."

"When you say 'lives that we control,' you seem to me to be talking nonsense," said the professor of mathematics candidly.

"Your social duty is simply to perform in unconsciousness, so far as you can, your special function in the social organism," said the professor of biology.

"Carlyle said in 1833, that that was impossible," murmured the pretty instructor, "because the whole social organism is diseased, and unconsciousness can't exist in disease."

Hilda did not hear her; she had turned on the professor of biology.

"You think, then, that you and I have no social responsibility whatever?"

But it was the professor of philosophy who answered: "A responsibility to keep temperate," said she, "to live sanely, with your eyes fixed on the eternal flux and eternal permanence of life, not on these petty and local phenomena."

"If your father were undergoing a surgical opera-

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tion with no nurse at hand, would you run away and keep your eyes fixed on the eternal flux and eternal permanence of life?"

There was a note of agitation in Hilda's voice which all heard with disapproval.

"That would be a clear case of natural duty," said the professor calmly.

"Where would you place the limits of natural duty? You must recognize that we are all in more or less danger of confounding duty with circumstance; but circumstance is not always the measure of duty."

"The limits of responsibility!" broke in the instructor. "I've always thought that would be a capital idea to treat in an ethics course. I know I've simply torn myself to pieces over it. The case is clear enough with parents; how about cousins? My second cousin was left widowed and penniless three years ago, and I had a terrible time deciding whether or no to give her the money I had saved to go to Europe and get my little Ph. D."

"What did you do?" asked several voices.

The pretty instructor arched her eyebrows plaintively: "Went to Europe," she whispered. "She married the next year, — a nice, rich, elderly man."

"Probably that was a moral wreck for her," suggested the professor of philosophy, "and you are responsible for it."

Everybody laughed except Miss Brooks.

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"Hilda," she said presently, in a tone of deep sorrow, "you are not looking at this question sanely. You are excited; and truth is not discerned in excitement."

"Not discerned in excitement!" the girl sprang restlessly to her feet, her sad, sensitive face quivering under the moon. "Is it ever discerned otherwise?"

She scanned the alert, dispassionate faces before her, — reduced to pure intelligences, with no flush of feeling, by the sharp cold light and shadow.

"Oh, this academic fatalism!" she cried. "Why is it that thinking seems to congeal the circulation? Where's audacity? where's adventure? — You think yourselves free, because you enjoy daring theories; but you are bound hand and foot with moral hesitancy. It is your type of fatalism which kept our best men for years out of politics, which has turned over the shaping of American life to the instincts of the illiterate majority —"

"Where, if you are a believer in democracy," interrupted the professor of philosophy, a little scorn in her tone, "you should be quite willing to leave it."

The mysterious tide of enthusiasm within began to ebb; Hilda lapsed into swift discouragement, yet she made an effort to rally.

"I would serve the democracy, — if I might," she said faintly.

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The assistant professor of mathematics surveyed the girlish figure with a twinkle in her eye.

"I should say that American democracy might dispense with your services," she remarked.

Hilda sighed. "I know that I sound foolish," she returned, "but my foreign training makes me regard our civilization from a point of view slightly different from yours. People here regard democracy as a law of nature; to Europeans, it is still a great social experiment. You take it for granted; they watch it at the bar. For myself, I do not see clearly; but one thing I know. If democracy is true, it must claim my energies and transform my life; if it were not true, — why, I should prefer to live in Florence. And yet," she went on, feeling her intellectual way, "what temptation to indifferentism! The scale is so vast, the movement so slow! It may take ages for the people to move at their own will as far as one benevolent autocrat could move them of old. And will they move aright? Right or wrong, we cannot affect it; I am fatalist too, you see. When the Strong Man comes, he will come not from our ranks, inept thinkers that we are, but from the ranks of the Plutocracy."

"He has come from those ranks already;" the professor of philosophy was speaking seriously. "You are wrong, Miss Lathrop, if you think that all of us still hold the faith in American ideals which marked the last generation. We cannot so close our

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eyes. But as you say, we cannot affect the course of history. Let the heathen rage, and the money kings of the earth imagine a vain thing, but do you seek the City of Zeus, afar from all these troubles, whereof the gates stand open forever."

Stars flashed and vanished like celestial fire-flies amid the gently swaying foliage. A dim sense that the girl was wavering toward the old pure tranquil life stirred through the group.

"We do not urge indifferentism or despair," said Henrietta Morse softly. "For me, though I feel the touch of scepticism abroad, I believe in the democracy profoundly. But the true way to serve it appears to me to be to cultivate a certain — faith" — the word was not popular at college, and was shyly used — "that the movement of society may on the whole be upward; to be loyal to truth when we see it clearly, and silent when we do not."

"'And wait, to see the Future come,'" quoted Hilda in an undertone. She settled in her seat once more, and was still, her chin propped in her hands.

Miss Brooks put out her hand in the darkness, and laid it on the girl's knee tenderly. Hilda thrilled to the touch she had seldom felt, to the voice she knew so well.

"Consider!" Miss Brooks pleaded; "the calm I wish you to gain is not that of fatalism nor of apathy. It is deeper, purer. It springs from conviction that the smallest bit of demonstrable truth

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is better than the most vast and shining illusion; that to add one's definite mite to the sum of beauty or knowledge is nobler service far than feverishly to pursue an ideal out of human reach."

Again the stillness fell. Every vibrating will was focused upon the motionless, slight figure. Slowly, Hilda raised her forehead.

"You draw me," she murmured; "all that you say is sane, is wise — "

Then suddenly the head was lifted higher, with the old proud pose, — like a madonna, some one had once said, of Niccolo Pisano.

"No!" her tone was serious and low; "I think with you; but I no longer feel with you. You may perplex my sense of duty; you cannot check what lies deeper, — my sense of need. I stifle in class isolation. My venture of faith is made; I believe that we are called to make democracy the home of brotherhood. Unless I obey that high calling to the limit of my powers, there is no peace for me."

"Are you a socialist?" asked Miss Brooks suddenly. The effect of the question on a group of Americans at that day was as if she had said, "Are you a criminal?"

Hilda paused before replying: "I am not sure," she said at last, "but I 'm not sure I am not."

The little group moved as if to break up; but Hilda arrested them: —

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"Wait a little! — Is the feeling that impels me unreal to you all?" she asked gravely.

Silence.

"Does every one of you feel that I am making a mistake?"

Silence.

"I am more lonely than I thought," said the girl wistfully.

.

Professor Brooks, Miss Morse, and Hilda were left alone on the steps.

"I should like to tell you two a little more," said the girl, "about what is happening to me. I have n't any definite idea of what life is going to bring, but I think I am at a parting of the ways, and I should like to be sure that I had done all I could to make you understand."

More to herself than to them she spoke, however, in a low, inward voice: "My natural tastes claim the same conditions as yours. I want to live in tranquillity and paint pictures. I could come here, and spend my time interpreting beauty, and sitting at my easel in this little world overlooking the river and the elms and the mountains. But it would n't do any good, for the great world would be sure to follow me, — it clings to the very folds of my garments. Last night as I was undressing, a dreadful thing happened to me; I saw the throngs of people who had made it possible for me to go to bed."

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"Hilda! how?"

"As I took off my dress, I saw the establishment where it was made, and the tired girls working late at night over the fancy stitching. Then the distance opened into the great shop where the material was bought, and a great army of clerks and saleswomen were spending the dusty hours measuring goods and watching human nature on the bargain hunt. The walls of the store lifted; I was in the whir of the great mills where the weaving had been done, I heard the loud machines, I saw the men and women working from sunrise, till they poured out with dreary faces into the air again, just as the red sun dropped. Far in the distance, I seemed to see a glimpse of pleasanter things, — of soft country meadows, where shepherds watched their flocks, of cotton-fields gleaming white, but they were very dim. All the people I could see clearly who had given me my dress had been held in dismal durance that I might have it. It was worse when I came to my white things; reeking rooms opened as I touched them, filled with wretched figures, sewing disease and weariness in every seam. So it went on: my shoes, the bed, the very house, — all had their revelation. Everywhere vital energy poured forth in unlovely ways for me. All I wore, all that surrounded me, meant just that, — the gift of life spent on me."

"You had paid for it all," said Professor Brooks.

"No, I had not," cried Hilda; "it was their gift

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to me. I had not paid them a living wage, for soul as well as body. I had paid just enough to keep them alive while they worked for me, as one feeds and shelters a beast of burden. I had paid not one penny more. You know that I am right, do you not, Henrietta?"

"You are right," answered the instructor in economics, analysis of price swept away and the bottom facts made clear by the ardor of her friend's vision.

"They pressed upon me," Hilda went on, "the great throng of producers, by whose labor I live, and I cried, 'Let me go naked, for the burden of my debt is greater than I can bear.' But I knew I must bear that debt. Then I looked into the future, and they were all going on, weaving, sewing, selling, giving away their manhood and their womanhood till life's twilight fell. And I saw myself, as the years went on, putting colors on canvas for the pleasure of the privileged classes. I saw the rest of you, too," — she glanced at her friends curiously, — "carrying on your high, tranquil, intellectual pursuits, while a haggard army like that surrounding me gathered unheeded around each of you, holding out pitiful hands, but you did not hear, nor see."

"Overwrought! Ah, what a pity!" thought the professor of biology, sadly.

"Suddenly the people around me all looked up, like the dead men in 'The Ancient Mariner.' They

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fixed their eyes on me. It was the Day of Judgment, I thought, and the sentence came. A wan girl of my own age spoke to me, and she said, 'You shall live forever conscious of our presence: we who have fed you, being hungry ourselves; who have clothed you when we were scantily clothed; who have built you shelter delicate and fair, knowing, ourselves, homes where the walls were bare, the air was foul; we who have made a life of high aims and spiritual joys possible for you, being, ourselves, held all the daylight of our lives to the coarse monotonous labor of our hands. Paint your pictures, if you can! You shall paint them with our eyes forever upon you.' And I said, 'Perhaps, in the years to come, I may paint pictures; but if I do, it shall be for you and yours. Probably, however, it were better to wait a little while, to give up painting new pictures, or seeking new truths, till the treasures of the past are made part of the common heritage. I cannot tell about that yet, but at all events, I am coming to you that I may escape you, for work I cannot, with your pleading eyes upon me. My servants, my masters, my benefactors, — I may not be able to share my gifts with you as you have shared yours with me, for between us men say that there is a great gulf fixed; but I am coming, I am coming though I fall into the gulf by the way.'"

Henrietta was crying softly.

"Hilda," she said, as they strolled home together,

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"I argued against you; but you know, — I wish I were going with you."

"I know, dear," Hilda answered gently; but she was feeling as solitary as only an exalted maiden can feel. "Why, you were interested in these things when you were a sophomore! You are — interested — still."

The friends were silent, both alike wistful. The scholar, catching contagion for the moment from a more militant and positive nature, yearned toward the life of deeds, — while the woman who had just opposed the counsels of the friends of her youth was suddenly aware of a profound sense of humiliation. Before their enlightened devotion to honorable tasks, her vague aspirations sank rebuked. A terrifying sense of presumption made her mind shiver as if struck by a cold wind.

Unconscious Henrietta broke in upon her mood of depression.

"You saw a great deal, did n't you, of Mr. Ferguson, before he married Dorothy Gerard?" she asked; "was it he who started you on this line?"

Hilda flung her face upward toward the clear heavens.

"It was no man, — no man," — she exclaimed, with a passion that bewildered Henrietta. "It was the stars."

"Just what are you going to do when you get to Langley House?" pursued her friend.

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"If my life is wasted, it will not be the first, nor last," responded Hilda coldly. "Very likely I am to be only a listener in the modern Babel till the end of my days."

She went to her room, repeating a scrap of verse that had lodged in her memory.

> "I cannot tell,
> I, child of process, if there lies
> A goal for me,
> Full of repose, full of replies — "

"All the same," she added prosaically, as she nestled among her pillows, "I wish I did know what I should do when I got there."

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CHAPTER IV

THE NEW COSMOPOLIS

LUNCHEON, at Langley House, was a lingering joy. Certain residents, to be sure, came late, ate with swift preoccupation, and ran; but there were always others, including as a rule several guests, free from engagements on that particular afternoon, and eager to gather as many impressions as they could from the vivid, desultory talk. Hilda Lathrop, a newcomer of a week, was one of these. The situation was exciting to her. An inner impulse, nourished in solitude, had driven her to a tenement-house district; she looked on these men and women who had preceded her with strong curiosity, and an unreasoning expectation that a new and satisfactory theory of social reconstruction would be evolved from their talk before luncheon was over.

This laudable hope, however, was frustrated; perhaps because she sat near the middle of the long table, and tried to listen to everybody at once. The top was congratulating a resident of commanding aspect on her success in getting the entire Leary family at once into a convalescent home; one side of the centre was listening to an account of a quarrel in a newly

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organized laundry union; the other debated how to manage a refractory boy's club. From the further end, large detached phrases floated to Hilda's eager ears, — "Social democracy," — "The industrial war," — "The coöperative commonwealth," — but the connection between these stimulating expressions was invariably drowned.

A sudden lull fell upon the rapid talk with the changing of the courses; for several of the most voluble speakers, leaving their sentences in the air and their guests a trifle dazed, jumped up and began to remove the dishes.

"This is the chief way in which we vindicate our belief in the dignity of labor, Miss Lathrop," it had been explained to Hilda at her first repast.

In the temporary pause, a masculine voice — for men, in a minority, were present — made itself heard down the length of the table. It was aimed at the head worker, who sat silent, a little abstracted, pouring cocoa into an endless procession of cups.

"I never thought till to-day what a paradox the name of this street is, Miss Abbott," said Mr. Mervyn, a keen-looking young lawyer, — "Lincoln Street!"

"Named in 1865 when the street was made; it was a fashionable quarter then," remarked the president in charge of the city history club.

"All this babel of nations," Mr. Mervyn went on, "under the auspices of the Illinois rail-splitter, 'new birth of our new soil, the first American.'"

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"The first perhaps; certainly not the last," said the head worker succinctly.

"How many nationalities live in the street, Miss Abbott?" queried some one.

"We are mostly Irish toward the upper end. But the Russian Jews are pushing the Irish out. The Syrian quarter begins in Lincoln Court —"

"There are a Khalil and a wee Anael in our kindergarten, just as if they had walked out of 'The Return of the Druses,'" broke in Jessie Bancroft, a young resident with a winning face. "The priest has a long white beard and is married, and they have mass in their own tongue."

"We went to a Syrian wedding the other night," added a still-faced Miss Ellis. "It was very touching, with moving lights and strange ceremonies. But the Irish boys got wind of it and rushed in and treated those poor Orientals as if it were a circus."

"There are a few Hungarian families," continued Miss Abbott, who had a way of drawing the conversation back into logic, "and of course the Italians."

"All under the patronage of President Lincoln!" persisted Mr. Mervyn.

The luminous eyes of a Miss Frothingham opposite him darted a glance of defiance. "Why not?" she queried.

"Yes, why not?" laughed Miss Abbott. "What better patron saint of the new democracy?"

Mr. Mervyn's long, distinguished, melancholy

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face turned to Miss Frothingham with a slightly satirical expression. "I wonder how many of these children ever heard of the martyred President?" he said.

"We have his picture in the kindergarten room," replied rose-cheeked Jessie Bancroft. "But the children don't like it. Luigi said this morning, 'Take away zat ugaly man, Miss-a Jessee; give anozzer pretty signora.' He adores the Sistine madonna, — though he tries to call her the Sixteenth madonna, he thinks that is her name" — A shout went up from the table, Langley House being addicted to madonnas on its walls.

"Did you explain Lincoln?" asked Miss Abbott.

"No, I did n't. I flatted. I said we had his picture because he was a great and good man. The Civil War seemed so far away from Luigi."

"He ought to be taught to understand it, — to reverence the American traditions," quoth a guest severely. She was a high-bred, middle-aged woman, with New England stamped on her eyeglasses.

"Well, they do take to American traditions in an extraordinary way," meditated Jessie. "Yesterday afternoon I came into the living-room suddenly, and there were about seventy-five mites sitting on the floor, — so Italian, — so Jewish, — so oriental! There was one little Chinese boy, with a minute pigtail. And they were all singing, 'My country, 't is of thee,' at the top of their voices. The scene was

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so funny and pathetic, it made me laugh and then it made me cry. I think I never knew what it was to feel patriotic till I came here."

"And realized patriotism under difficulties," said Miss Abbott whimsically. "Please pass me the cookies."

"All the same, what a pity it is that they have n't some better song than 'America,' to foster their national feeling!" The speaker was Janet Frothingham.

"And what is the matter with 'America,' pray?" Miss Saltonstall of the eyeglasses spoke with a certain asperity.

"It is merely a sectional poem for one thing," replied Miss Abbott gently. "What Mississippian would care to sing it?"

"If sweet Freedom's song rang from the tower of the engine-house, these imps of the street might understand the allusion," remarked Mr. Mervyn. "What do they know about mountain sides, and rocks and rills? They never saw a rill, except in the gutter."

"They hate the country when they get there," said some one. "Don't you remember Mollie Hannan saying the country was so horrid because you could n't see anything but spaces?"

"Anyway, when I took Rachel to the top of Pollock's Hill, she liked it," protested Jessie. "She said, 'Ain't this grand? I admire scenery, it adds so.'"

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"Langley House influence, I fear," laughed Miss Abbott.

Miss Saltonstall had been sitting lost in thought, a look of pain in her eyes.

"I was on the top of a New Hampshire mountain once last summer," said she now, gently and impressively. "It had stormed all night, but at sunrise the mist lifted like a blown curtain, and we saw all the world below, an azure glory. We looked from Monadnock and Wachusett across Lake Winnepesaukee, to the great peaks of Washington and Lafayette, then to the Green Mountains and the far Adirondacks, across the Connecticut River Valley. Six states were in sight. The very names were sacred. Presently some one started 'America,' and every voice joined in. 'From every mountain side let Freedom ring.' The poem did not sound unreal then, I assure you. I for one, as I looked over that fair land, thanked God for my heritage and for my forefathers."

"Thank you, Miss Saltonstall," said the head worker. "That does me good. We people who are absorbed in the problems of this bewildering latter-day America get to feeling as if the big cities were all the nation. But that is America too, that peace and beauty and the traditions of high, plain, God-fearing living."

"It is certainly the most characteristic part of America." Miss Saltonstall looked puzzled.

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Just here, a commotion outside caused every one to rush to the window.

"Aw, Mickey, let 'er go!" "Look out for the cops." "Sheeny! Sheeny! Sheeny!"

Half a dozen boys were flinging these taunts at the object of their swift pursuit, — a scared little Jew, who fled furtively down the street.

Miss Abbott opened the door with decision.

"Patrick, — and you, Mortimer, — and you, Michael," she called in clear, undisturbed tones, "what did I say to you about chasing Jacob?"

"He ain't no American, like us: he 's a Sheeny," muttered the leader of the group, as small Jacob was borne away to consolation by a sympathetic resident.

Laughing at the appositeness of the incident, the others withdrew to the living-room, — a room softly tinted in hues like a sunshiny mountain meadow, with pictures that opened windows upon wide skies and far horizons, woodland paths or the heaving brightness of the sea. The little group gathered around the driftwood fire, and the talk went on.

"There 's the America of the future for you, Miss Saltonstall," said Mr. Mervyn dryly.

"And our next duty," mused Miss Abbott, "is to connect it with the America of the past. Did ever a nation have such a task set before it as ours? We are the gathering-ground of the peoples: on our soil they meet. But in whatever direction one

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looks one sees dividing abysses. Cleavage of classes, cleavage of races, cleavage of faiths! an inextricable confusion. And the voice of democracy, crying aloud in our streets: 'Out of all this achieve brotherhood! achieve the race to be.'"

"It seems to me very doubtful," remarked Mr. Mervyn, "whether the future is to see one American race. As I watch these hordes sweeping down upon us, another image rises before me, — why not an Italian city here, — a Hungarian colony there, — a Swedish, a German, — all preserving their racial autonomy, as they certainly seem inclined to do so far, but held together by political union? Such a thing has never been seen, I grant you, — though the Roman Empire suggests it, — but neither have our conditions ever been seen. The thing is thinkable."

"It is the socialist picture of the Europe of the future!" exclaimed Hilda in an undertone. But the young lawyer's words had roused another speaker, — a Unitarian minister of waving gray hair and fine, sensitive face.

"Would the Americans — by that, I mean 'we' — remain the governing race, do you think?" asked the Rev. Dr. Talbot.

Mervyn raised his eyebrows. "Are we that now, should you say, Miss Abbott?" he enquired. "How about the politics of this ward, in which you vainly invite your humble servant to mingle?"

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Janet Frothingham moved a little impatiently. Miss Abbott gave no direct answer.

"I am thinking over your picture of the future," she said. "It may be; but even if the races stay separate, — I confess I had never before thought of the possibility, — they must in some way form a nation."

"Political and industrial forces will achieve that," said Mervyn.

"The unity that makes a nation great," rejoined Miss Abbott, "is that of spiritual consciousness, not that of material interests."

"We shall get it through the schools;" Miss Saltonstall spoke with cheerful assurance. "We shall indoctrinate all these foreigners in time — all the worthy ones, at least — with the great American tradition."

"The countenance of George Washington, — Unitarianism, — and pumpkin pie," murmured Janet. No one heard her except Mr. Mervyn, who flashed an amused glance at her, then turned to Miss Saltonstall.

"Why foreigners?" he asked with courteous deference.

Miss Saltonstall stared, perplexed and perturbed.

"The Indians are the only true Americans if you come to that. All the rest of us are immigrants as surely as small Jacob."

"I think," said Miss Abbott, "the Pilgrim Fa-

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thers would have liked to hear that. Those godly and democratic men would have grieved to find derivation from themselves the shibboleth of a new exclusiveness."

Mr. Mervyn raised his eyebrows, cynical once more. "Are you sure?" he asked. "Now the Pilgrim Fathers always seemed to me rather a limited corporation, — the stock of tolerance strictly limited to members of the company."

"'Land of the Pilgrims' pride' — it was funny to hear all those little Roman Catholics and Jews singing that." Jessie Bancroft smiled at the recollection.

"I don't hold a brief for that poor little poem," said the Rev. Dr. Talbot. All turned toward the cultured voice. "It 's pretty bad poetry, and it can't even boast a tune of its own. But I confess that I don't like to hear the Pilgrim Fathers abused. By more than accident of time were they the first immigrants. They held the moral lead too. They lifted the banner of an ideal; that banner we still hold high. We hold it over these degraded races that seek our shores."

Miss Saltonstall looked contented for the first time. Janet Frothingham was restless; her lips were curling, her cheeks scarlet. Miss Abbott threw her a warning glance, but to no avail.

"We had a university extension lecture here the other night that I think you would have liked,

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Dr. Talbot," she said sweetly; "on the 'Colonization of New England.' I regret to state that a friend of mine, Tim Haley, summed up its effect on the audience as follows: 'Say,' said Tim to me, 'what 'ud ye git us here for to hear about thim canting English heretics?'"

A little shock ran through the room. Janet went on hastily: —

"You won't establish your common tradition by poking your Pilgrim Fathers or your liberty of conscience at the Jews or the Irish."

Mr. Mervyn looked entertained, but Miss Ellis seemed distressed, and Miss Abbott was speaking with her most perfect courtesy.

"I think Miss Frothingham means that we must not only make these later comers free of our traditions; we must also honor theirs."

"Honor theirs!" exclaimed Miss Saltonstall. "Why, what traditions have they? These ignorant, superstitious people!"

But Miss Abbott was kindling; her quietude and sweet courtesy were less noticeable now than a certain light in the eyes and swift drawing of the breath.

"Think," she said in a low voice, "what our national hymn shall be when the poet of the future comes, how it shall thrill with the life and passion of the peoples become a nation, of the latest as of the earliest comers! Many the heroes it will commemorate."

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"A treatise on universal history?" suggested Miss Frothingham.

Miss Abbott laughed good-humoredly. "I suppose I was soaring," she said. "No, just because our American hymn must imply so much, it ought not to embody any special set of local allusions. But somehow it must gather up the enthusiasms of all the races, for ideals and enthusiasms they have. I hope some day they may appreciate President Lincoln; but first, perhaps, we must learn to appreciate the great names of the Irish, of the Italians, of the Russians, the Swedes."

"Pray, how should these concern our national hymn? They were n't Americans."

"They died and lived for freedom. I wish we could say, where freedom is, there is America."

"But you can't, you know." The mockery had died from Janet's eyes; "now can you?"

Miss Abbott sighed.

"That is the worst of this hymn on the lips of children," Janet went on quietly, but with a suppressed vibration in her voice. "It is n't poetry, neither is it truth; it is a blank, plain lie, and they know it. 'Sweet land of liberty,' they sing, while their fathers and mothers, their elder brothers and sisters, have entered into a life-long bondage; and they know that the same bondage awaits them too in a few years, and that their parents, and they themselves are anxious for only one thing, — that they

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may manage to sell themselves a little sooner than the law permits."

"Do you really think," broke in Hilda, "that the life of the wage-earners may justly be described as bondage?"

"I was just going to say that!" exclaimed Miss Saltonstall. "You sound — excuse me — a little sentimental and exaggerated, my dear Miss Frothingham. These people win far better wages than in their own country. They are entirely free. The way up is open to every one of them if they have ability; no barriers impede their upward progress."

"Do you feel that way too?" Miss Frothingham was looking at Hilda.

"It seems to me a matter where knowledge is more important than feeling," replied Hilda. "I have come here as a listener. But most of the people I have listened to in my past life agree with Miss Saltonstall."

"I don't believe" — Miss Frothingham spoke more and more slowly — "that I will try to defend my phrases to you just now. When you have been here a year, you shall tell me whether I have exaggerated."

Hilda nodded gravely.

"But one thing is patent at once," Miss Frothingham went on; "it is that we are ignoring or suppressing the best gifts that these people might give us. We force them to devote all their powers to ministering to our physical wants."

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"Pray what else are they fitted for?" queried Miss Saltonstall.

Miss Frothingham vouchsafed no direct answer. "And meantime," she went on, "we intellectual people try to lead the higher life, free from material cares, and generally avoid all contact with the others, unless we try to do them good. Yet often these slaves to our bodies hold treasures needed by our souls. The compelling power of ancient faiths is in their hearts; they bring to our shores the imaginative wisdom gathered from the experience of the ages. I've heard a Russian shirt-maker and an ignorant Irish girl, sitting by this fire, cap each other's stories far into the night with wild, beautiful legends that the folk-lore society would send its members far afield to hear. They have come to us, these stories, borne in the faithful hearts of the people, and we won't take the trouble to listen. We are always talking about our lack of antiquity; well, antiquity is here. How long it will stay, I can't tell; the whir of factory wheels scatters it fast. And if we ignore the wealth of traditions which our emigrants bring us, we ignore still more their creative powers. Yes, I know they are the dregs of their nations, the poor, the outcast often, always the common people. But when did the arts develop from an aristocracy? The English stock needs enrichment. It has developed on our soil a civilization with strong, fine traits, but arid, hardened, materialized,

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nervous. Would n't that civilization profit by the gifts of other races, less competent in action, it may be, but with more aptitude for emotion and dream? Look at this street! It is a symbol. Here we have the Celt — "

Mr. Mervyn raised his eyebrows whimsically; Janet caught the slight movement, and went on with more animation and feeling in her tones.

"He is the dreamer among nations, he moves forever under the glamour of a mystic spell. Can we do nothing with these warm Irish hearts and quick imaginations, but put them in our kitchens and let them ruin our politics? I tell you, Miss Lathrop, that Katie Donovan in my class of Irish working-girls has a poetic sensitiveness that I don't believe your trained college students can equal."

"I can well believe that," smiled Hilda. "How about your other races?"

"Why should n't the Italians supply to us the instinct for the arts? The race that produced the great painters ought to have some riches for the Anglo-Saxons, who have never known how to do anything with the visible world except to conquer it. As for the Germans, think of their musical powers! My friend who has the little music school here tells me that among her uptown pupils, about one in ten has some real aptitude, while here the proportion is ten to one."

"That is curiously striking."

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"Yes, but the children leave her and drop their playing at twelve or fourteen to go to work. Another thing that seems dying among us is the power of philosophical thought— "

"Oh no," said Hilda; but Janet's rapid speech overbore her.

"Look at the whole trend of our nation; is n't it away from idealism, speculative or practical? Well! If you want refreshment on these lines, talk to the Jew. The Jew passes for a money-making machine, but behind the pawnbroker the idealist is hidden. —

"Then there is the Slav." Janet paused; her eyes, full of dreams, seemed fixed on some one not present.

"He brings us the capacity for martyrdom," she said softly; Hilda wondered why Mildred Ellis's eyes rested with a look of trouble on her friend. After an instant's musing, Miss Frothingham resumed: —

"We ask their lowest from all these, and we get it. If we helped to develop their finest gifts, and gave them free play, we might in three or four generations have a nation the most wonderfully equipped that the world has seen. As it is, their life is labor and sorrow, for when they do not work they suffer, — oh, how they suffer, the workers!"

Miss Frothingham caught her breath and paused in her rapid speech. On the face of every one

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present who was not a casual guest, Hilda saw the same look, grave and pained. For an instant, deep silence fell.

"And while they are in the prison of labor," Miss Frothingham went on, "all these fair powers of theirs sit sleeping with folded wings, and do not even peep out of the window. From the mere point of view of wise national economy, our treatment of the foreign populations on our shores is a tragedy of waste. 'Sweet land of liberty,' indeed!"

"We'll not deny the ideal because we have not reached it, Janet," Miss Abbott said gently; "we 'll 'hope till hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates.' With the help of those who suffer shall yet be built in America the Holy City."

"St. John saw that city coming down from God out of Heaven," said Miss Ellis, speaking again at last. "It had not arrived, it was a perpetual becoming; but we can always see it if we lift our eyes."

Janet Frothingham sat very silent for a moment, in the midst of the silent group; then suddenly sprang to her feet with her face illumined: —

> "I will not cease from mental strife
> Nor lay my sword from out my hand
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land,"

she quoted with a ring in her voice.

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A few hours later, Hilda sat in her own little room, looking out, as she had always loved to do, into the night. Her inner sky was dim as that without, and even the purpose and object of her coming was shrouded. Her mood was that described by Maeterlinck when he says that life is lived most truly in the shadow of a great expectation, expectation of we know not what, whether a task or a vision.

Across the narrow yards where rags flapped in the breeze, the windows of the opposite tenements shone unshaded and exposed. The very lights looked immodest to Hilda. "I shall be able to study domestic life to advantage," she reflected.

Then her mind travelled back to that other night, when in the very moment that she faced her private tragedy, she had suddenly become aware of a distant summons to wider experience from the waiting, calling world.

"I have come a little way since then," she thought; "such a little way!"

The pain, so fresh in sharpness at that time, had in a sense not lessened. She was not a woman to love and forget. Lawrence Ferguson was the only man on whom her heart would ever look. But as a constant physical sensation can often be disregarded, so with this steady craving; it left her nature free. And indeed she had come to recognize that not even a happy marriage could have satisfied a deeper desire which was her birthright, — the desire for the

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union with all humanity, lacking which she perished in sterile isolation, — to achieve which how many barriers must be thrown down! Of this mystical desire she never spoke: it would have seemed fantastic enough, even to her nearest, coming as it did from a woman whom the world accounted singularly unsociable and reserved. Yet till it were fulfilled, she felt herself in bondage.

To tear herself away from her natural connections, and come among working-people, in hopes of finding this free human fellowship, was a course of action perhaps unnecessary and forced. Yet, enclosed as she knew herself to be in clique and class prejudice, it had seemed to her that only when she should reach vital intercourse with those most alien and remote, would fellowship and rest be fully won. She wearied, moreover, of the conventional life in which it is so difficult to probe beneath the artificial and accidental; she had hoped that among those with whom primal experiences were more evident, the common ground of humanity would be easier to find.

Had she been mistaken, she wondered, brooding over the talk of the afternoon. On that other night when she had overlooked great Paris blended to a unit in the moonlight, men, generalized in her thought, had seemed to her very near, held in the union of universal sorrow. To-night, she realized with a pang that as she sought to approach them they receded. Recalling the sights, the sounds, of

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her chosen district, she tried to create in her own mind the consciousness of those with whom she was to live; and as she did so, they retreated into immeasurable space. She remembered Miss Abbott's words about the forces that divide us, and race, class, and religion, mighty presences, hovered over her and waved her back when she would have drawn near, — back from those she loved and longed for. From her own world of associations, she sent her shuddering spirit out into vast mental distances, seeking, like Noah's dove, for a point of friendly and familiar earth on which to rest; and like the dove, it returned to her affrighted. Then ancestral blindness seemed to fall upon her, and she groped alone in vain in a lonely world.

Long after she was in bed, she watched a man and woman in an opposite window, bending over a machine of some kind, stitching, — stitching, — stitching. The chatter and crying of children lingered late in the street. Near by, harsh musical instruments and loud laughing suggested some festivity in progress. That died away at midnight, but just as she might have slept, having drawn her blind to shut out the tailor at his task, came the sound of a woman's sobbing. Low, deep, steady, it seemed now here now there, but for two hours never ceased. Curses in a man's voice blended with it from time to time. From farther away floated the wailing of a sick child.

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"These are my lullabies," said Hilda to herself.

She slept, at dawn. When she waked, the early sunlight was shining through her shade, and to and fro in its radiance tossed shadow branches, cast by a neglected tree that grew, spindling but courageous, in the next yard. Hilda looked smilingly at the delicate interweaving of curve and line, and light and shadow.

"A message from the forest!" she thought; "and what is beauty, even a mournful hint of beauty, like that given by this dismal little tree, but a pledge of love? My day begins well."

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CHAPTER V

GUESTS AND A PARTY

HILDA had been dining uptown with her relatives, the Howard Browns. Resisting the entreaties of her pretty cousins to make one of a theatre party, she walked briskly homeward through the keen November air, smiling at the contrast between the compassionate expression of her relatives, and the buoyant sense of escape and exhilaration that filled her soul. Her brief stay at Langley House had already brought her a new intuition of freedom. Abandoning analysis, she had simply yielded during these first weeks to the restfulness of strong experience. Now, however, the image of the last hour danced before her mind, — the charming table surrounded with bright faces, the delicate food, the clever, glancing talk. From all these she turned away with a slight mental nausea, and quickened her pace, feeling distinct pleasure and social anticipation in the thought of the monthly "at home" to which she was bound.

"You're hurrying to the party? So am I! Great institution, the party."

Philip Mervyn had caught up with her. Hilda

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was by this time on easy terms with the young lawyer whose brown visage was one of the most constant sights at Langley House. Critical and curiously attractive, he only spoke to touch with light satire the opinions of others, nor had Hilda yet heard him strike a positive note. It would have been puzzling to account for his constant presence had one not happened to notice the occasional expression under his sleepy lids, as he watched the sad, generous, scintillating beauty of Janet Frothingham.

"Yes," returned Hilda, as he swung into step. "And I 'm wondering why I 'm so pleased. I might have gone to see Willard."

"More novelty to this," suggested the other.

Hilda shook her head. She felt that the keenness of her satisfaction would sound silly if put into words.

"Do you think," said Mr. Mervyn abruptly, "that they realize the social democracy they talk about?"

"Yes, I do." Hilda spoke with decision, surprised at his chiming with her thoughts; "that 's why I like it all so much. I feel as if I had thrown off the conventions of generations, and were stepping free. Till I came here, I never in my life spoke to a working-man except on the basis of class distinctions, or as employer to employed."

Mr. Mervyn looked at her curiously. "To me," he said, "there 's a lot of sham about the whole

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thing. The existence of the House is artificial. The very fact that all those women choose that mode of life self-consciously is a witness to the class distinctions they pretend to deny."

"Who denies them?" retorted Hilda.

"Did n't I hear you call yourself a socialist the other night?"

The girl moved impatiently: "There are two sets of people," she said, "who make me cross: the people who say that if you are a socialist you must be sociable, as if the things were synonyms; and those who think that if you have democratic feelings you must deny facts. Of course we have class distinctions. Of course we have n't equality. It is just because the fruits of civilization are so beautiful, because they affect not only possessions but personality, that we can't rest — granted the American ideal — till it is possible for every one to have them. I protest against being called undemocratic because I know the difference between refinement and vulgarity. Not that I 've met any vulgarity here; that belongs to another stratum. Please excuse me for talking so fast. Here we are."

The hall was gayly decorated, and Janet Frothingham, Jessie Bancroft, and the others, in pretty dresses, were moving about among the guests. Hilda, slipping in quietly, played the rôle of an observer for half an hour, listening to scraps of conversation, and wondering why she was so absurdly

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happy, — for the talk did not always turn on pleasant themes.

"And so there 's only Ella working since they turned Heinrich off. She 's a cash-girl into Duffield's. I don't know what we should have done without her, I do not indeed. But three dollars a week won't keep four people. Excuse me for mentioning it, Miss Bancroft."

"Mr. Strauss, I can't say anything except that I 'm sorry."

"I know, I know; it does us much good to have you ladies say that to us."

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"Good-evening, Mrs. O'Neill; how are you? Is your cough better?"

"I guess so, thank you, Miss Ellis. I got a new doctor, and he give me an electric band to wear that excites the juices of the liver. He says the trouble 's with my liver, though I think every organ is affected. That black medicine my last doctor give me used to heat the liver fine, but I think it was too strong for the eleesymonary canal, and so the heart suffered sympathetic spasms."

"I am sure an electric band will be better for you than that black medicine. Don't you think so, Miss Kearney? Miss Lathrop, let me introduce Miss Kearney, one of our best friends in the neighborhood. She used to take black medicine too, but now she goes to the Temple of Christian Science."

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"Pleased to meet you, I am sure, Miss Lathrop," said little Miss Kearney, looking as if she wished to put the newcomer at her ease. "Do you know the Power of the Thought? Miss O'Neill, she don't believe in it, but she 's going to, some day."

Before Hilda could answer, Mrs. O'Neill broke in, to her relief: —

"Well, Minnie," she said good-humoredly, "you never made much of demonstrating on them mosquitoes, last summer."

"Demonstrating on the mosquitoes?" queried Hilda.

"They was awful bad," sighed Miss Kearney. "They did torment aunt so! But I used to demonstrate on them earnestly, and aunt did say she thought the bites did n't itch so bad after a demonstration."

"And is your aunt pretty comfortable? Miss Kearney has a dear old aunt whom we all love; you must go to see her," — Miss Ellis explained.

Miss Kearney's face fell. "So, so," she said wistfully. "But I can't seem to get her what she 'll relish to eat. I fry a bit o' meat 'most every day, but half the time she don't savor it. And times is so bad, Miss Ellis. There 's a cut-down 'most every week. I could n't no way make more nor a dollar a day before, and it 's gettin' less an' less. I 'm better off than some, though," she went on more brightly. "Say, I 'm glad I thought of it; I wish one of the ladies would go to see the family over us, — you,

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if you can make it convenient. There 's five little children. Mother 's dead ; I guess the father drinks. Them little ones does all the cooking an' cleanin', — what cleanin' there is. There they was yesterday, all five of 'em, the baby a-pining away like, and the eldest tryin' to toast some scraps of dry bread for their dinner. 'Sometimes we has pie,' says he, as peart as you please. I went right down and made them some good strong tea, — I thought it would be so good for the baby. But some one ought to see to them regular."

"I 'll go to-morrow," said Mildred, — "and now I must speak to Mrs. Giardini. — Well, Mrs. Giardini, I have n't seen you since Giulietta got back from the seaside. Was n't she looking rosy ? "

Mrs. Giardini was a mild-looking Italian, with complaint on her brow. "Yes, ma'am," she assented. "But she has not been easy to lif-a with since she do come home. 'Mamma,' she say to me, do Giulietta, 'why do we have to lif in a cellar ? It iss not naice to lif in cellars.' And she ask for a cup-a to herself, and a saucer. And she want her face washed " — the voice took on an accent of querulous surprise. "Every day she want it-a washed. I tink I not let her go again."

"That is a little hard," Mildred replied sympathetically. "Still, it would n't take very much time to wash her face, you know."

"Miss Lathrop," intervened Jessie Bancroft, the

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corners of her mouth dimpling a little, "let me introduce Mr. Hopkins, with whom I am sure that you will have much in common. Mr. Hopkins is a great lover of books."

And indeed this elderly janitor of a neighboring building found his chief joy in a little book-shelf of inherited volumes. N. P. Willis, Smiles, and Longfellow were among his treasures, authors on whom Hilda, to her mortification and his evident surprise, was unable to converse. Stevenson and Kipling, to whom she would have turned the talk, had not risen on his horizon; but Shakespeare and Milton were familiar friends, and the old man's eye kindled as he declaimed in an undertone the speech over the body of Cæsar. Mildred joined the group presently, bringing with her a member of Hilda's newly formed class in the History of Art, — Katie Donovan, a slender Irish girl with languid grace of mind and body, whose dreamy soul shone like a light through her plebeian features.

"There is one thing," Mr. Hopkins was remarking gravely, "which disappoints me in the great Shakespeare."

"Disappointed! In Shakespeare!" exclaimed Katie, and Hilda, looking into the dilated eyes, saw there Juliet in her balcony, Perdita among her flowers, the moonlit wood where fairies play, the clash of arms at Agincourt, and the wind-swept moor over which old Lear must wander.

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"I am disappointed," Mr. Hopkins went on firmly, "because, so far as I can see, Shakespeare is interested only in persons of rank and wealth, in lords and ladies, in princesses and kings. He is wrongly called universal. When he presents common people, it is only as a mob for the gentility to influence, or as men who are to be laughed at by their betters."

"I don't see why that makes any difference," returned Katie. "I feel just as if Cordelia was my sister; I never remember she 's a princess, or poor Ophelia a fine lady. And I love to have them all so beautiful, and to see the splendid clothes and the palaces, and the wonderful places they live in. It sort of rests me."

"'Ladies fair and lovely knights,'" smiled Mildred. "I like to think of them too, Katie."

Mr. Hopkins smiled indulgently, yet with an air of rebuke. "Shakespeare, I fear, was an aristocrat in his heart," said he; "but Milton now, who is, as I understand, considered the second in rank among the poets of England, he was a stanch republican."

"Milton was republican in politics," remarked Hilda, "but I think he was of a very aristocratic temper."

"You are mistaken," answered Mr. Hopkins; "he had a truly democratic spirit of humility."

"Humility?" Hilda, not accustomed to associ-

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ate this quality with the haughty bard, was a trifle dazed.

"I am thinking," replied Mr. Hopkins triumphantly, "of that fine sonnet on his blindness. Do you recall the concluding line? 'They also serve who only stand and wait,' it runs. Miss Lathrop, there is no position in modern society more humiliating, more menial, than that of a waiter. I have myself been a waiter, and I know. Our poet does not shrink from it, and many a time has that line brought me consolation."

"See," exclaimed Mildred, probably anxious to create a diversion, "Miss Abbott has just come in, with Mr. O'Hagan. She is bringing him this way. I am glad. She told me yesterday that she wanted you to meet him."

Mr. O'Hagan, the most important labor-leader in the city, was a powerful looking man, with long face, stubborn jaw, and luminous eyes. He beamed on Mildred, crushed Hilda's delicate fingers in a hearty grasp, and turned to Katie.

"Hello, Katie! how 's the laundry union? That quarrel between Nelly O'Shea and Hannah about the dues settled yet? We 've got to hold that union together, you know."

"It 's all right, Mr. O'Hagan," Katie hastened to say. "Everything 's lovely. Miss Ellis talked to Nell, and to Hannah, and I don't know how she done it, — she did it, I mean, but Hannah apologized last Tuesday."

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Mr. O'Hagan looked with frank admiration at Mildred. "Takes a woman to do that!" he remarked. "I might have talked to them girls a month."

"I think seeing how unhappy Katie was helped more than anything," said Mildred.

"Katie 's a good girl," O'Hagan assented approvingly. "A good union girl she is, when she does n't lose her head in poetry and such!"

"But the poetry helps the union in me!" Katie was exclaiming, when she stopped, realizing that Mildred was asking Mr. O'Hagan gravely: —

"Do you think it is really wise to attempt to build up this laundry union out of all the different nationalities? If the girls were all of one race, it might be done, but — "

Here Hilda's attention wandered, for she overheard Mr. Mervyn's voice behind her, asking with some asperity: —

"Who is that peculiarly unpleasant looking man who has been talking to Miss Frothingham in the corner for half an hour? She is n't paying the least attention to her social duties."

Hilda turned, and saw Janet, oblivious of her surroundings, leaning against the piano, her eyes held in the eyes of a man somewhat shorter than herself. One might pass the man by without a thought, so insignificant was his figure, so expressionless at first glance his face. If, however, a second glance were

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given, there would be a third, a fourth, a long spell-bound study. Tragedy, passion, and a something menacing were hidden behind the pale, dull mask.

"Who is he?" Mr. Mervyn was repeating.

"Ah," replied Jessie Bancroft, who stood beside him, looking at the two with knitted brows, "that is the question."

"Don't you know him?"

"Does any one? — But I can introduce you, if you like. He goes by the name of Simpson."

"No, thanks," responded Mr. Mervyn languidly, looking especially clean, slender, and American. "I don't fraternize much with Russians."

"I 'm with you there," exclaimed Mr. O'Hagan, interrupting Mildred, and wheeling abruptly around. "Say, you and me don't often agree, Mr. Mervyn, but we do this time. The dirty sneak! He 's one of that anarchist crowd. What they want is to make trouble in the unions, that 's the thing they 're after. The best thing this country can do is to get 'em all together and ship 'em back where they came from. See there! He won't meet my eye!" And sure enough, as Mr. Simpson chanced to turn in the direction of O'Hagan, his pallor deepened, and a look of blank dislike overspread his face.

"Is he really a Russian?" asked Hilda.

"I suppose so," Jessie answered. "At least, he has been twice in Siberian prisons, he says. And he knows all the Russian socialists. He is an

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extraordinarily interesting talker," she went on. "He held us all till midnight after the last economic conference at the House, telling stories about the efforts of boys and girls in the Russian high schools to educate the peasantry."

"He is probably Miss Frothingham's Slav with a capacity for martyrdom," Mr. Mervyn reflected.

Jessie rippled with laughter. "He does n't look it, does he? But I should n't wonder," she said. "I think he 'd like to blow up everybody from the President to the corner policeman, and be shattered himself" — but here the piano drowned her voice.

"The gentleman 's goin' to give us another of them lovely comic songs," exclaimed Mrs. O'Neill, contentedly.

It was highly comic, and when it was finished "the gentleman," who was a well-known tenor, sang another. Then he sang lullabies, tender little things, and a love-ditty and an old ballad or two. The room was full of laughter and pleasant sighs. The women to whom Hilda had been talking nudged each other in ecstasy; a hollow-eyed lame girl pounded with her crutch; a blind woman raised her eyes with a foolish, beatific smile. Everywhere the harassed look of physical and mental hunger which Hilda had noticed as the hall-mark of the company was overlaid by an expression of delight. The child-soul of these depleted people, imprisoned in their overworked and exhausted bodies, seemed to awake and

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peer astonished through the weary windows of their eyes. There was nothing melodramatic about this audience, yet the more Hilda looked at it the more it stirred her. A deep joy moved in her heart, — was it the joy of brotherhood, unchecked at last? She had always been rather averse to society, but here her old impatience died away, as she recognized in social intercourse at its simplest an eternal sacredness and beauty.

"Miss Lathrop," — Janet, with flushed cheeks, was standing before Hilda, — "I especially want you to meet my friend Mr. Simpson;" and as the evening wore to a triumphant conclusion in a Virginia Reel the gray-faced man sitting between the two women transported them into far regions, telling, in vivid, broken English, of bitter struggle against oppression, of heroic sacrifice, showing itself in deeds of violence often, of dramatic reprisals, and passions that could not be quenched.

"Ah!" Hilda drew a long breath as she spoke. "I have lived enough in Europe to know that what you say is true. The battle for simple tolerance — for reasonable liberty of thought — is not yet won there. How good American air must seem to you!"

Simpson's brows darkened. "At first; not now," he replied.

"What! not with all our free institutions!" exclaimed Janet in mock earnestness.

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Simpson's hands swept in dramatic, furtive gesture around the room. "Do these look free?" he questioned. "Am I fr-ee? A man of genius, a man ready to die for humanity, — I say it simply, — I have proved it. And here in your free country, I cannot earn my bread."

Hilda was moved to laughter, but the eyes of Janet were serious.

"You have no czar," Mr. Simpson went on with exquisite softness of utterance; "but have you not a president? — Have you not law? Have you not marriage? Haf you not the Church? Ah! The bondage of the old world is here, — a false magic has made the chains invisible, that is all. But wait! The day shall come, the people they shall see those chains, they shall r–r–r–ise; governments shall cease!"

"And then?" asked Hilda. The man left her very cold.

Simpson looked at her with the dazed eyes of the fanatic.

"Then?" he said dreamily. "Ah, — then, — the great Reconciliation!"

It was impossible to ask what this enigmatic utterance meant, for the party was over. The last guests having taken leave, the Langley House people lingered for a little talk.

"Well, what do you think of our party?" Miss Ellis asked Hilda.

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"Oh, I did like it!" sighed the girl happily. "They had such a good time, — and so did I."

"Then you don't agree with the large lady who asked me to-night, 'What can you possibly find to talk about with these people, my dear Miss Ellis?'"

"That is question number three," said Jessie Bancroft sagely. "'Do you find that your efforts are really appreciated?' is number one; and number two, 'Can you discern any serious change for the better in your neighborhood?'"

"Could you tell the uptown people from the downtown?" pursued Miss Ellis.

Hilda nodded. "Yes," she said; "for the uptown people had the air of expecting the agreeable; the others looked as if they expected the unpleasant."

"Rich people are often discontented and miserable enough," remarked Janet, rousing for a moment from a reverie.

"They live out their tragedies, however," said Hilda, "in an atmosphere of ease. They move among pleasant words, and courteous gestures, and clean table-linen. Society has developed a wide code of expression which implies the attractiveness of life; this softens our afflictions, and, naturally, affects our aspect."

"It is a hideous mockery!" abruptly exclaimed the silent, mournful Mrs. Bronson, — a woman, as Hilda had already learned, who looked at all life

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through the medium of a personal tragedy. "One of the best things here," she went on, "is the absence of imitation cheerfulness. Life is honest, at least."

"I should say so!" sighed Jessie. "Sometimes I should be glad of any cheerfulness, imitated or not. I come home from a round of neighborhood calls with my mind a chamber of horrors and my sympathies all gaping wounds."

"Now I love calling," meditated Mildred Ellis. "When people talk about diseases, I usually introduce babies; but it is often a comfort to them to talk about diseases too."

"Oh, well, you know that you would be perfectly contented to live in a convent, Mildred, and confine your intercourse to the beggars at the gate." Jessie spoke with a pretty petulance. "Nevertheless there is — there was — an art of conversation, an art of social life."

"I don't care much for it," mused Hilda. "Conversation as I have known it is half the time a means of slipping away from realities. It is a game, and it ought — it ought — "

"Mildred would say that it ought to be a sacrament," suggested Jessie.

"I have always heard it implied," went on Hilda, "that to be comprehensible only to the cultured was a mark of distinction. I wonder if just the opposite is n't true? To be able really to meet one's

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fellows in the region of the common life is a very rare power; it must be a very blessed one." She could not put into words the strange, happy warmth that flooded her, but she added shyly: "I should think that power would be more easily developed here than anywhere I have ever lived."

There was a light in the girl's clear face as she spoke, and a similar light, pure, tender, shone in the eyes of Mildred Ellis.

"All the same," Janet insisted after a moment's pause, "social intercourse here must always be profoundly sad. For life is sad. There were almost as many tragedies in this room to-night as there were people."

"You 've been talking too much to Mr. Simpson," said Jessie affectionately. "He 's enough to depress all the actors in a vaudeville."

"He is full of fire against human injustice, if that is what you mean!" returned Janet with spirit. "I do not myself find that atmosphere depressing."

Jessie lifted her eyebrows without speaking.

"You are always unfair to Mr. Simpson, Jessie."

"I like to hear him talk," Jessie replied coldly. "It is quite a dramatic luxury. But I must confess that he is not to me a convincing person."

"I should n't think that a Russian anarchist imported into America could bear much real relation to American problems," remarked Hilda. "I 've known some of them abroad."

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"He can be a very real danger," interposed Miss Abbott quietly. Janet stirred with a little restlessness, and after a moment Hilda began again.

"That terrible look of anxiety on all the faces!" she cried. "I can't escape it."

"Anxiety," assented Janet, glad of the diversion, "is the curse of the poor. It materializes them when it does n't torture. They live on the edge of a black abyss of failure, hunger, helplessness, crime. Only a few dollars perhaps in the savings bank, in many cases only the precarious strength of their hands, keeps them from slipping in and vanishing. They have lived on the edge so long that they are a little dulled to its terrors; but there was not one person here to-night, there are few people in the working-classes, free from ceaseless and well-grounded apprehension."

There was a moment's silence, then, —

"Is it not worse than usual just now, Miss Abbott?" asked Jessie Bancroft. "There seemed to be a shadow here to-night. I know there is always the normal amount of trouble, — sickness, loss of work, and so on, but it seemed to me more than normal. Am I getting over-sensitive?"

Miss Abbott, during the long talk, had sat wearily, shading her eyes from the firelight. She rose now, and the little group rose with her.

"It is worse," she said in a low voice, "and it will be worse yet. We are on the eve of great in-

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dustrial distress. The papers do not know it yet, — no one knows it; it is just touching our industrial level, and it will rise. I may be wrong, I trust I am, but if I am not mistaken, there will be tragedy enough before the winter is done."

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CHAPTER VI

THE FRUITS OF POVERTY

Miss Abbott was not mistaken. Through that long winter, not only stolid suffering and wretched apprehension, but misery rising to terror and desperation, reigned in Lincoln Street. Hilda wondered why, powerless as she was to help that misery, she should elect to share it; she fled in spirit and came near fleeing in body to her mother, who wrote of rosy sunsets on the Nile and tête-à-têtes with tranquil Sphinxes. But she did not go.

In time, the newspapers took to announcing "Strained conditions in the business world." Then, at progressive intervals, "Considerable distress said to prevail among the city poor," "Large numbers out of work in the garment trades," "Strikes in several shoe factories," "The number of unemployed reported by the labor unions stated by Senator Newcome to be grossly exaggerated," "Rumors of an Industrial Army forming in the West to march on Washington," "Times the worst since 1865."

Long before avowals had reached this frankness, the situation was obvious enough in Lincoln Street.

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The Associated Charities held out stoutly for a long time, — alleging that although they had a somewhat larger number of cases than usual to handle, yet the suffering they met could be traced back in every case to the familiar demons of incompetence, shiftlessness, or drink. Langley House did not stop to retort that these very demons were the brood of evil circumstance, unlikely to generate in quantity where the sunshine of prosperity shone warm and pure; it contented itself with sorrowfully noting the process by which, as work grew scarce, the infection of unemployment spread upward. For the charity people were right in a way; the feeble, the dull, the morally unsound, heard the mandate of dismissal first.

"Only a sentimental fool could object to the law which refuses work to such people."

This was Miss Harding, the Associated Charity worker for the district. Janet, Hilda, and she were holding counsel on certain common responsibilities over a cup of tea in Hilda's room. The Burne-Joneses, as Hilda had promised her mother, were on the walls, and the old masters likewise; it was a rest to the three weary women to sit there and relieve emotional stress by the play of mind on mind. Generalizations have ever been a solace to sorrowing mortals, from the days when the pangs of Io dropped a little into calm as she listened to the large prophecies and summaries of the Titan.

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"You can't expect the shiftless not to suffer," Miss Harding went on. "Why should n't they suffer?"

"They should," Janet retorted, "if right to live is measured by service rendered the community. If we are going on that principle, though, I wish we applied it to the shiftless rich as well as to the shiftless poor."

"Perhaps Miss Harding thinks that the parents of the shiftless rich served the community for two generations," suggested Hilda.

"No, I don't," replied the charity worker. She was a small energetic woman, with honesty and capacity evidenced in her decided face. "But because there are a lot of people artificially protected from the action of natural law, and getting their food dishonestly from a universe to which they return nothing, it is all the more satisfaction to me that there are social strata where that law can take its course, and winnow out the undeserving."

"Natural law?" queried Janet. "He sendeth rain on the just and the unjust; but that may be an economic blunder."

Miss Harding looked dazed.

"There 's a phrase I always liked," Janet added. "From each according to his capacity; to each according to his needs."

"One of your socialists said that, I suppose," sniffed Miss Harding, wrinkling her nose. "It 's

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about as sensible as they usually are. A fine lazy world we should have of it! Who's to judge of capacity, pray? The man himself?"

"Who's to judge of capacity? Well, who's to judge of desert?" retorted Janet. "You say that natural laws winnow out the undeserving. If those laws had had free play, the race would never have had the Paradise Lost or the philosophy of Plato. The great poets and philosophers would have been pushed straight down into your class of Incompetent. Were n't they worth to the world what they cost it? But I'm not at all sure they could have earned their living."

"Neither can Nicholas Cohen," sighed Hilda. "Do you know him? He's a Russian Jew tailor, and a poor tailor, I suppose; at least they say he does n't give satisfaction. He tries hard enough, but he's slow and sickly, — you can see at a glance that only a trickle of vital force is running through him. But that man thinks! — I found him the other day with no food in the house poring over Boehme. 'Mees,' he said, 'do you know ze distinzion between ze grim-geist and ze liebe geist? Zey make ze Godhead together, — I say to myself as you come in, Nicholas, you know best ze grim-geist, and zat is well, for he it is zat makes ze world go round.' He's the most patient, saintly creature."

"I can't see," said Miss Harding dryly, "that

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the community is bound to give a man a living because he reads Boehme and has a patient soul."

"If only we could agree in our definition of work!" meditated Janet. "I wonder how much genius to-day is running to waste in factories? I know men who would joyously suffer martyrdom for a great cause, yet can't earn their bread and butter."

"I suppose," said Miss Harding, "that you're thinking of your precious Mr. Simpson. Five places have I found for that man, to please you; three he would n't stay in and the other two turned him out. Unjustly treated, is n't he?"

Janet moved a little impatiently, as she often did when Mr. Simpson was mentioned.

"You are all unfair to Mr. Simpson," she said with dignity. "He explained to me himself about four of those cases, and he was not in the least to blame."

Hilda did not consider a discussion of Mr. Simpson between Miss Harding and Janet profitable. "What we are asking," she said hastily, "is whether we ought to decide a person's social value simply by his capacity for the lower forms of labor."

Janet's essentially sweet nature had recovered itself swiftly; she turned to Miss Harding now with a charming gentleness born of penitence.

"Dear Miss Harding, I see your point of view perfectly," she said. "I'm sorry for you Associ-

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ated Charity folk; you meet people on their worst side, and it 's no wonder that you take the worst view of them. These miserable people who are losing their jobs you know in their economic capacity, and you despise them. I know many of them in their social and human capacity, and I love them. If they were rich every one would say they had beautiful souls; and as for efficiency, they are no more helpless than my own feminine relatives."

Hilda remembered her mother, and could not suppress a smile.

"But you see these people have n't any right to the choice qualities of the rich," she said. "They are paupers."

"So are many of us!" sighed Janet; but Miss Harding's small person was a-quiver.

"Patience! — Generosity!" — she broke forth. "Stupidity and extravagance I call it. I found old Mrs. O'Flanigan yesterday actually feeding her cat on the food she got from the diet kitchen!"

Janet's eyes danced. Truth to tell, she had for some time been aware of this penchant of Mrs. O'Flanigan's, and had wickedly screened her from detection. She now preserved a discreet silence.

"I never saw anything like their lack of common sense," the poor agent continued. "The other day I found that a nice woman I know would need baby-clothes next month, and I took real pleasure

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in getting her some. She has given them away to a worthless person in the basement! She says this person has nothing for her newly born child, — and *she* does n't need the things yet! She spoke quite improperly when I reproved her; she seemed to think I had no heart, while it was she who had no head. Such a thing makes me feel helpless; it 's so dishonest!"

"I suppose it is," said Hilda slowly. "But it is curiously like the Sermon on the Mount."

"Many traits developed by poverty remind one of the Sermon on the Mount." There was conviction below the semi-mockery of Janet's manner. "The attitude of non-resistance is sedulously practised among the poor; they obey literally the precept to take no thought for the morrow; and all they have is, as Miss Harding says, to an exasperating degree at the service of their neighbors."

"Now, Miss Frothingham," cried Miss Harding, "you can't defend the improvidence — "

"Oh, no;" Janet spoke with light, high-pitched irony. "I don't defend it. The day is to the scientific method, in benevolence as elsewhere. Personally, I have never accepted the Sermon on the Mount as authority; it would take me into too strange regions."

"The truth is," said Hilda presently, "that there are many kinds of virtues, but only one set has any economic value; and these are, we

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must admit, not the virtues most emphasized by Christ."

There was a little pause, during which Miss Harding reflected, with a puzzled sense of grievance, that she was the only church member present, and that religious authority was being cited against her by the ungodly.

"The whole thing bewilders me," Hilda went on. "Why does n't environment produce qualities needed for survival? Why do not economic virtues appear where economic pressure is greatest?"

"We are looking for the wrong thing," answered Janet. "We expect poverty to develop powers that enable men to escape it; what it does, scientifically enough, is to develop powers that enable men to get along comfortably within it. We look for efficiency, it presents us with incompetence."

"Incompetence comfortable!" exclaimed Miss Harding.

"Not in the long run, but it is very convenient from day to day, and from day to day the poor live. Improvident! Reckless!" Janet was full of energy and scorn. "So they are, thank Heaven! They would die of melancholia in a year, if they were n't."

"You are upsetting; but I think I agree," meditated Hilda. "Of course, there is a zone in which small means are a great incentive to thrift, but our neighbors live below it. Do you know, it occurs to

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me that to discover the limits of that zone would be a useful thing for statistical enquiry to do."

"Capital!" cried Janet, her face brightening. "Tell Miss Abbott to set somebody at it!"

"Miss Harding," Hilda went on, "if you were placed like our neighbors, would n't your common sense tell you to be comfortable as you went along and trust to Providence?"

"The whole thing is a vicious circle," said Janet. "We leave the most ignorant members of the community under the most difficult conditions, and grumble because they don't make the best of them. I remember a pattern house, at an exhibition, to be run for five hundred dollars a year, — and I also remember the comment of Mr. O'Hagan: 'They 'll have to get a ten-thousand-dollar woman to run this house.' Do you know what I should like? To take the capable women who are so contemptuous about the dirt and extravagance of the poor, and put them into the conditions of tenement-house women. Of course, they would do much better than the old inhabitants. I wonder whether their daughters would."

Miss Harding at last nodded amused approval.

"'T would n't be half a bad plan," she assented. "I scolded Katie Donovan the other day, — pretty girl, with a nice way to her, — because she did n't keep the family clean. 'I guess you would n't keep six children clean,' she answered, 'if you had to

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wash them all at the kitchen sink because you did n't have a washbowl.' "

"The destruction of the poor is their poverty," sighed Janet. "You may call their qualities virtues or vices, according to your point of view. One thing is sure, — they keep them poor. The worst conditions of the working people are self-perpetuating."

To the exhilaration which had intoxicated Hilda during her first weeks in Lincoln Street, had succeeded, as time passed on, a sense of suffocation. Slowly she wakened to the realities of the lives she was so fain to love and help; the deadening hours when work was had, the demoralizing indolence when it was missed; the stifling homes; the dearth of noble pleasure. Of all these things she had been silently observant. Now at last pain forced a cry to her lips.

"Janet, Janet, how long? Surely they will rise and rebel!"

"No, they won't," said Janet.

"Why not? How can they bear it? Why should they bear it?"

"For just the reasons that we have been analyzing. They that sit in darkness, being fast bound in misery, do not supply the forces that make for freedom. The longer I live among them, the more clearly I see that."

"There have been revolutions."

"Not in America. Mr. Simpson expects one, —

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but he does n't know us. Things are n't bad enough with us. I have n't any hope — I — I mean, I don't think there is much chance — of a general uprising. Our industrial system does n't starve people outright, you know. It keeps them constantly underfed and anxious, but with just enough hope so that their enfeebled bodies and minds shrink from change, lest a worse thing befall them."

"But that is hideous!"

"The present state of things" — Janet's tone was especially calm — "seems to me fiendish beyond the invention of the human mind. No! We shall have threats, restlessness, many strikes, big and little, but nothing more. Unless" — she paused thoughtfully — "civil war should develop out of the labor movement. Shall I say, God grant it?"

Miss Harding had been getting more and more rigid.

"Good-by!" she said. "It shocks me, — I repeat, it shocks me, to hear you two young women talk."

As she closed the door, Hilda caught her friend's hands.

"Janet!" she cried, "I feel on fire. It can't be endured. What shall we do?"

Her friend looked at her quietly, a half-tender, half-cynical smile in her eyes. Suddenly Hilda burst into a laugh.

"I remind myself," she said, "of a classmate

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who came to me once as we were all hurrying to lecture. 'Hilda,' she said, 'an awful thing came into my head last night; all of a sudden, I could n't prove the existence of God. Won't you tell me how to do it before the bell rings?'"

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CHAPTER VII

PHILANTHROPY AND FACTS

THE misery continued to increase. Sensational items found their way into the papers. Conferences and committees met, disbanding with no conclusion. Soup-kitchens and coal-yards were opened, and municipal employment was discussed.

Mr. Simpson, Janet's friend, relieved his mind, if he did nothing else. Assembling about one hundred and fifty gaunt men, he marched them, on a Sunday morning, straight through the pleasantest residence streets of the city to the rich and beautiful building which Janet was wont to describe as the Church of the Holy Privileged. Entering, they made their way, under the guidance of discomposed ushers, to the free transept, where they sat, decorously enough, through the service, gazing across at the delicately dressed congregation. In the middle of the sermon, — an eloquent discourse on Pauline theology, — they arose in fairly good order, and filed out again. Simpson's idea in his little histrionic display was poorly caught. Few of the men knew why they had been brought there, and as for the congregation, largely composed of pious ladies, it is to be feared that they were

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under the delusion that religious motives were beginning at last to affect the unwashed, and that their minds were divided between gratification and a comfortable assurance that the ventilation of the church was good. What the rector of the parish thought, no man could tell.

Langley House discussed the incident, not without relish; but incidents came too thick to arrest attention long. Every resident was working to the verge of exhaustion; visitors, now apologetic, now defiant in their wretchedness, haunted the House from morning to night.

"Work! Work!" cried Hilda one day at the lunch-table. "The refrain rises from this street to the heavens: 'Give us work! Give us work!'"

"It is an indignity that any human being should have to demand work as charity," said Janet Frothingham.

"These are people who have never begged before, even for the right to labor," sighed Miss Abbott.

"I have a queer feeling," exclaimed Jessie Bancroft, "that I've climbed through the looking-glass with Alice. I'm used to people who approach work with a sense of conscious virtue, and I can't get used to having it coveted with this tremulous greed. Isn't it a strange contrast, Mr. Mervyn?"

The lawyer roused himself with a start; he was gazing in a reverie at Janet. The girl's warm beauty had drooped sadly in these days, and bitter words

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were more frequent on her lips; but the more her glow faded, the more adoring was the look that gathered in Philip Mervyn's eyes, putting their cynicism to rout.

"The rich condescend to work; the poor aspire to it," he answered abstractedly. "The discipline of the one is the privilege of the other."

"Think," added Hilda, "of having a steady job as your one idea of bliss!"

Janet had been toying with her food, bestowing scant attention on the conversation. Now she raised weary eyes.

"The tide of misery," she said, "is rising higher and higher. It is sucking people lower and lower. We stand by and watch."

"Yes!" sighed Jessie. "How helpless we are! It seemed a great thing to come here, and our respective friends make a fuss over our devotion. But we might as well be at home meditating on the Failure of Benevolence. Think —"

When bright Jessie gave way, it was time to change the current. Miss Abbott was sitting straight up in her chair, and speaking.

"Let me cheer you all by telling an experience of mine this morning," she said, and the company noticed with surprise that her face was twitching with laughter.

"Be relieved, my friends," she spoke with mock gravity. "The social conscience is awake at last."

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Every one leaned forward curiously.

"About an hour ago," she went on, "a gentleman was ushered in to me who looked like a retired sea-captain. 'Is there really so much destitution as the papers report?' he asked.

"So I began and told him tales, of which there is no lack.

"'But this is terrible!' he exclaimed. And then, 'I've come to you with an offer. I have a large house out of town, with twelve bedrooms, and no one lives there but my mother, my aunt, and myself. Since people in the city cannot pay their rent, it seems a pity for a good house to stand idle.'"

"What a sensible man!" exclaimed voices in a chorus.

"'Now,' he went on, 'I should like to receive some people as my guests till the hard times are past. They would be treated as members of my family, and I would devote myself to making them happy. I could take fifteen.'

"I thought Utopia had arrived, and was all ears. 'I am sure,' he said, 'that you ladies are the persons to get them for me. I can take them out with me on the train to-night. Only, I must make a few conditions. My mother prefers women. "Henry," she said to me, "remember, no noisy men in my house." Then they must be clean and tidy. I have a good deal of bric-à-brac around, and I must have people who will appreciate it, don't you know?'"

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A shout went up from the table.

"Hear the rest. 'I 'm afraid I must ask to have them unmarried, too,' he said. 'The truth is, my Aunt Anice has an antipathy for married women. She wants them at least forty years old, too. "Henry," she said to me, "do not bring any giddy girls to this house." ' I asked him if widows would do, and he answered, with evident trepidation, that they would n't. 'Anything else?' I asked. 'Only one thing,' he said. 'Our old cook does n't like the Irish. In fact, she ran after me with the broom in her hand, and called out, "Master Henry, if you bring any dirty Catholics into the house, it 's the last you 'll see of me." '

"I summed it up for him. 'Fifteen Protestant American women over forty years of age,' I said, 'and clean.'

"'Yes,' he answered cheerfully, rising. 'Will you have them at the Central Station at five o'clock? I thought I 'd go downtown now and get some pretty fancy work for them. I 've often bought it for Aunt Anice, and I thought it would be a rest to them to sit in a nice parlor and do fancy work. You don't suppose they will object to a late dinner, do you?' "

"Who would ever believe that happened?" cried Janet, when the laughter had subsided a little. "It sounds like an invention of Stockton's!"

"He was a disinterested man," said Miss Abbott. "In much benevolence, I suspect an *arrière pensée*."

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"As for instance when people use the Settlement as a convenient dust-heap," Jessie sighed. "I unpacked a barrel this week that held two soiled ball-dresses and twenty volumes of old sermons. I did puzzle over the mind of the person who packed it."

"Oh, well," remonstrated Mildred. "It is n't always so bad as that. We ought to remember how much kind and wise help we constantly receive."

"The kind help is n't always wise," said Jessie. "Two days before Christmas, last year, I received ten dollars, with a pretty letter from a lady. She had lost her little boy, and she wanted the money used for some little cripple, who was blind and had never had a Christmas. I knew several cripples and two or three blind children, but I could n't find the combination, and I returned the money. Afterward, I found her saying everywhere that she was disappointed in our Settlement, she feared that our intimacy with the poor had been much exaggerated."

"Most charitable impulse," sighed Miss Abbott, "is exerted at a tremendous distance from its object."

"Charity, charity!" cried Janet. "How I hate the word, how I despise the thing! From Thanksgiving turkeys and picture-cards in mission Sunday-schools, on to flower-missions, relief agencies, settlements, through material alms, large and small, to the spiritual alms which we here pride ourselves on distributing, it is a grim mockery, a quack salve ap-

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plied to a gaping wound, a sedative to the few pangs of conscience that disconcert the privileged classes. We laud our modern philanthropic movement to the skies, almost we talk as if Christianity were coming to its own; the more enlightened — which means often the more cold-hearted — jeer at the sentimental, but without realizing that if any of us see men at all, it is still only as trees walking, not as brethren."

"Miss Frothingham, I am surprised at you!" Mervyn spoke with his usual tang of satire. "Just look at the effort expended on this street. The day nursery, the hygienic kitchen, the free dispensary, the temporary home, and the Mission Church, to say nothing of the Settlement."

"And the Salvation Army station, which is more to the point than anything you have mentioned," assented Janet; "and a Methodist church and a Baptist church, and a Roman Catholic church 'round the corner.' Also, as many as you please of those ornamented death-traps which we call model tenements."

The talk carried Hilda to other days. She remembered how Lawrence Ferguson told her that his definite conversion to socialism dated from the conviction of the futility of all philanthropic effort in a competitive civilization, which had swept over him as he walked down Mile End Road in London, saw the numberless agencies for relief and education that marked every block, — and watched

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the faces of the people. In the old world and the new, was not the lesson the same?

"Our philanthropies," Janet was saying, "make a fairly respectable show when we segregate them and look at them in the mass, which is what we like to do. They are less impressive if we put our segregated class indulgences in a mass beside them. But the time when they dwindle into nothing is when we pile up on the other side the primary conditions, industrial and social, which create the lives of the poor."

Jessie Bancroft sighed. "When one realizes the enormous scale of industrial forces," she said, "the vast network, the complexity, the — the — why, in a way, the majesty of it all, I feel like Newton's child on the seashore. Did you ever see the effort it takes in landscape gardening to level a little heap of earth hardly worthy the name of a hill? I feel as if we women would better leave this enormous mountain of misery and wrong alone. I think and think," — Jessie knitted her pretty brows, — "and the more I think the less I see."

"Probably you will go on thinking a while longer." Miss Abbott smiled a bit sadly at the charming face as she spoke.

"If ye had faith," quoted Mildred Ellis gently, "even as a grain of mustard-seed, ye should say to this mountain, 'be ye thrown down into the depths of the sea.'"

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For a moment no one spoke; then Janet rose wearily: —

"Till we get that faith," — she said, "and I don't feel very near it at present, — I suppose that we shall continue to apply high art and kitchen garden to minute points of the social surface. It is time for me to go to my English class and correct its punctuation."

For, through the sufferings of the unemployed and the perplexities of those who loved them, through apathy and rebellion, through efforts and through despair, the normal activities of Langley House went on. Groups of tenement-house women were taught palatable cooking ("in utensils," Janet remarked a bit unfairly, "which they never saw before and can't afford to buy"); little girls were trained with charming toy instruments to sweep, make beds, wash clothes, set the table ("the kitchen gardener was showing the children this morning how to receive callers' cards on trays," Janet whispered to Hilda); stamp-saving flourished, especially through the deposits of small Jews; a mothers' club received instructions as to the proper dieting of babies, according to the latest, and alas! often most expensive methods; college extension classes discussed with fervor, if not with grammar, the symbolism of Dante, or the modern feeling for nature. From uptown, the learned and the brilliant came with cordial readiness and a sense of moral adventure to

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bestow their choicest gifts in the way of lectures upon minute audiences, composed frequently of street boys and a few women. All these activities seemed to Hilda very beautiful and impressive. She had never before lived with people who were moved by even a faint desire to share their treasures with the world at large, and she appreciated the devotion which the attempts implied, and resented Janet's disparaging mockery. Of the larger civic interests of the house, pressed somewhat into the background this winter, she saw little, but she revered them from afar.

Yet, as the slow burning of men's hearts and bodies continued through the months, and the fiddling proceeded, she, too, came to feel that there was no alternative but tears or laughter.

"Miss Abbott," she remarked one evening, after a lecture on "Social Movements in the Fourteenth Century," delivered by an earnest professor to three labor men and a handful of boys, "America seems governed by centrifugal forces, driving us farther and farther apart."

"There must be one centripetal force, at least," replied Miss Abbott, "or that audience and the lecturer would never have met. The doctor certainly would far rather have been in his study, and the audience in the street; but something was at work, however blindly, — and there they were, face to face."

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"What use, when they were not soul to soul?"

"People will never find out their separation till they are confronted. Confronting them is our chief business here."

"A disheartening business," mourned Janet.

"None of you heard that Camford Senior the other night," said Jessie. "I was so ashamed! He furnished the entertainment of the evening, and it consisted in a series of comic songs, taking off the greed of the Jews. Our people were perfectly heavenly; the boys came up afterward and tried to comfort me. 'Now, Miss Bancroft, don't you feel bad,' they said. 'You could n't know he was n't a gentleman.' I'd have given anything to have him hear them."

"Futile or foolish beings that we are!" sighed Janet. "My own grandfather was one of the devoted men of the last generation, who gave his life in the attempt to force the Calvinist scheme of redemption upon the Buddhist mind. His blood is in my veins."

Mr. Mervyn, as usual, was close at hand. "Our æsthetic satisfactions," he remarked in his familiar tranquil tones, "our intellectual joys, our moral code, if you like, are wholly alien to the working-people. To try to apply them is as snobbish as it is artificial. You will never succeed except with a few individuals who are made either miserable or priggish by their initiation. You are trying to go

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against the natural tastes of the populace, which make for coarse pleasures, coarse literature, and coarse art."

"Exactly!" assented Janet.

"It is delightful to hear you agree to that, Janet," smiled Hilda. "Those are the ideas of my mother."

"And you know you don't believe them," said Jessie.

"No, I don't," acknowledged the young cynic. "For one thing, I believe that the psychical life is a great deal stronger here than it is among the classes materialized by luxury. What do all these people who come down here to talk know about the souls they are speaking to? But like Noah's weary dove, I am seeking some solid ground for my feet in this flood-tide of social misery, and I don't find it in æsthetic philanthropies."

"It is a great deal harder to go on with them this winter than it was last," said Jessie Bancroft, "now that we know that all the people we are trying to amuse or instruct are — a little hungry. They want work, — and we give them lectures on Hegel, or invite them to amateur dramatics."

"That contrast is always there," said Miss Abbott. "I am not sorry to have it brought home to you younger women by a little over-stress. The only holiday they have is when they are out of work, and that they can't enjoy."

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Janet had been tapping absently with her foot on the floor for a minute or two.

"I have it!" she exclaimed suddenly. "I am going to start a new society. It will be called 'The Society for the Intellectual and Æsthetic Enlightenment of the Unemployed: S. I. A. E. U.' I think those initials are disengaged, though I must look in the Charity Directory to see. Only persons who have lost their jobs and have no immediate prospect of any will be eligible. I shall engage the best lecturers the city can afford. The topics will be chosen with a view to the popular mind; the courses will be free. I will have one on 'Points of Contact in the Philosophy of the Germans and the Thought of the Orient.' Another shall be on 'Some Alleged Obscurities in the Poetry of Browning;' another on 'Conditions of Labor among the Ancient Assyrians.' I think the most valuable course will be in the history of art. The class will be exposed alternately to photographs from the most dislocated of the old masters and to glaring chromos. Differences will be explained and tests of appreciation applied. Any expression of wandering thoughts will be severely reprimanded. Most of the class will be in a state of uncertainty concerning their food or shelter for to-morrow; some of them will have left hungry families at home. It will be a rare opportunity for them to practise concentration of mind and detachment from material things. Of course, perfect regularity in

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attendance cannot be secured, as they must return to work when they can get it. So I do not think it will be wise to attempt examinations. But for many of them there will be a long stretch of time, which would otherwise go quite to waste, and be lost probably in vain repinings. We are always lamenting that the poor have not leisure to profit by the advantages we offer them. Here is our chance, and theirs! I foresee the time when unemployment will be hailed by the more intelligent as a blessing, and a period of industrial depression may result in a distinct gain in culture on the part of the working-classes."

"May I come in?" asked a cheerful voice at the door. "I don't know what Miss Frothingham is talking about," went on little Miss Harding, the charity agent, joining the circle comfortably; "but I know it is some nonsense, and it has made you all blue. I just dropped in, Miss Abbott, to say that I had found work for Giuseppe Simeone. I knew you 'd be glad. He won't commit suicide this time."

"Oh, I am thankful!" exclaimed Miss Abbott. "Poor Mrs. Simeone was here to-day, sobbing so that I could n't control her. She had overheard Giuseppe hearing little Dante say his prayers and telling him to ask God that they might get work or die."

"Well, he 'll be giving thanks to-night," said

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Miss Harding. "Now, what were you all talking about that made you so solemn?"

"Oh, nothing," said Jessie. "We were only meditating on our general uselessness. That was a wholesome occupation, and one that you will agree with, was n't it, Miss Harding?"

"Not a bit of it," said the little woman heartily. "Because I won't let you be sentimental, do you think I don't appreciate what you are doing down here? Don't you ever dare to doubt your usefulness! I don't care much about your high art and literature and music; they may be all right, but this does n't seem to me the place for them, here in this festering ignorance and sin. But as to your practical work to improve the homes and make these boys and girls more decent, I tell you it 's grand. I 'd been working in this district eighteen years before you women came here. I don't believe you have any idea of the loneliness. No one paid any attention. I was left all by myself; I thought the Lord himself had forgotten these people, and I wondered why I should try to help them if He did n't take the trouble. Then this House came, and all you clean, pretty women, and you did n't hold your skirts away and keep your nice ways to yourself; you took right hold. When I saw Miss Ellis one day dressing Mrs. Croly's children and sweeping the floor, while the father was snoring drunk and the mother sat and howled, I thanked

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the Lord. Every woman you teach to keep her tenement clean, and every boy you influence to give up bad language and spend his evenings here instead of at the saloon, is just so much won for the Lord's side. I 'm a cross old woman, and when you say queer things or look at things crooked, I scold you; you must n't mind that; I give thanks for you every day of my life, and don't you forget it."

She was gone before they had recovered from amazement, — an energetic little modern Balaam, whose blessing was all the more grateful to these discouraged women because it came from lips which had usually uttered rather sharp criticisms and administered many a wholesome snub.

"She is a dear," said Janet, "and it is very comforting to hear her. But, of course, for all her shrewd practical sense and experience, she can't see far enough to realize that the kind of work she likes to have us do is the most pernicious of all."

"Janet," said Jessie, "I do wish, if you cannot utter cheerful sentiments, you would keep still."

Janet flushed hotly: "I will not!" she cried. "I will not prophesy, Peace, Peace, where there is no peace."

"You need not prophesy at all," murmured Jessie; but Janet paid no heed.

"I will not for one moment forget nor allow others to forget, if I can help it, the real state of the

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case, — the inexorable movement toward a greater and greater evil in which we are all helplessly involved. Every time that we teach a working-woman to make her wages or her husband's go a little farther we set in motion a force of suction which tends to lower the universal wage. Every time we give one of these boys moral and industrial training, make him quick, competent, virtuous, we are teaching him to rise to success upon the necks of his fellows, pushed lower than they were. Could all women be trained to live on less, could all men be raised to a higher point of economic efficiency, the grudging sum which the world allows them for a livelihood would sink in proportion, and the process of demoralization be repeated. So much for sentimental philanthropy! The only consolation is that we shall never effect anything on a large enough scale to count. But that is cold comfort; for it throws us back upon the old despair. On every side the road is barred in; nor is there one among us, no not one, who sees the Way of Salvation."

Jessie had slipped away in the middle of Janet's Jeremiad. Miss Abbott, before it ended, had wandered over abstractedly to the other end of the room, and was gazing at an etching of Millet's. Philip Mervyn sat motionless, his face, turned to the girl, very wistful in the shadow; and Hilda lingered by her friend's side.

"Do you really mean it, Janet?" she queried

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sorrowfully. "Do you seriously think that all the work here is wasted?"

Janet sat with her hands on her knees, looking straight before her.

"Either wasted or injurious," she answered. "We try to teach people to make the best of their conditions: we should teach them to rebel against those conditions. We are struggling to prolong an evil situation, and our work is only saved from immorality by its futility."

"Then why do you stay here?"

"Yes! why?" added a deep voice, with a catch in it. Philip Mervyn had thrown off cynicism and reserve for the moment; out of the dusk in which he was sitting, his heart glowed in his eyes. "Why?" he added, with increasing meaning. "Why?"

Janet glanced at him, unseeing, indifferent, and raised her face to Hilda's, bending over her.

"Because I do not know what else to do," she answered wearily. "Nor in what to hope. Socialism, such as you are always talking, does not draw me. Why entrust more power to governments that cannot manage what they have without corruption? As for fighting against the corruption," — she raised her brows; — "Mr. Mervyn, tell Miss Lathrop what you were telling me about your talk with the temporary mayor of ——."

Mervyn had recovered himself; if it is a little gall-

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ing to find your love so immersed in general thought that she is not even aware of the significance of your words, the discovery at least restores self-possession.

"It was n't much," he responded quietly. "It happens that I knew the man well at college — a capital fellow, too. He has just refused an invitation to run as reform candidate in the next campaign. I got off some of Miss Abbott's theories on him about the duty of Young America to devote itself to municipal politics, and he looked me straight in the eye: 'Phil,' said he, 'I refuse this thing because it 's my honest conviction that no city in the United States has ever been run, nor can be run, without compounding with crime.'"

"I despise your reformer in politics," Janet broke in vehemently. "Supercilious aristocrats at arms' length from the people; — I believe the bosses they fight have quite as fine moral insight as they."

"The Labor Movement?" hazarded Hilda weakly. The perversity of the girl made her feel helpless at times.

"Miss Abbott's shibboleth!" sighed Janet. "All very well in its way; but it does n't cut deep enough; it leaves the world divided into hostile camps, and it establishes an aristocracy of labor."

"You might join Mr. Simpson," reflected Hilda with a touch of irony, "and organize histrionic social shows for the benefit of the public."

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"I might do worse," flashed Janet.

"That is criminal nonsense, and you know it." Philip Mervyn spoke in a voice neither of the girls had heard before, a little husky. Even in the obscure light it was impossible not to see the dull red that slowly gathered in his brown cheeks.

Then Janet understood.

She drew a deep breath, paused, and looked friend and lover sadly in the face, speaking slowly, with the aspect of a grieved child: —

"'Der Geist der stets verneint' is my familiar. What can I do? I seem one great nerve of pity; I would turn anarchist in a moment, and blow up every government building in the city, if I thought it would relieve the misery. Unluckily, that sort of action appears especially futile to me." Her voice had grown lower and lower; she raised it now a trifle, and it seemed to gather new meaning as she sought Philip Mervyn's eye. "But what I cannot understand, is how men and women, knowing what they know about their brothers, can yield themselves to private emotion. And so I stay here," she concluded, "railing at the failure of benevolence, making a few people more comfortable, while I grow more wretched myself. But" — a fresh vibration crept into her tones — "it won't be for long; it can't be. Help will come, — insight, faith in some power, some action, that will lead us out."

"Have you ever thought," asked Hilda diffi-

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dently, "that the Christian Church might be such a power?"

Janet looked at her friend with her most inscrutable gaze. "Did not you tell me," she said, "that you were to have an interview to-morrow with Dr. Wilkinson at the Church of the Holy Privileged — I beg his pardon, the First Church — about the commission to the mayor on behalf of the unemployed?"

"Yes," replied Hilda.

"I will answer your question when you come back," said Janet.

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CHAPTER VIII

A TALK WITH A PASTOR

THE First Church lifted the delicate arches of a tower through which the sunset loved to gleam into the purer air above the most beautiful square of the city. No sky-scrapers reared their harsh bulk against its slender lines, no thunder of trolley cars insulted it, and the ruder class of vehicles were excluded by a sign: "Webster Place: no teaming allowed." The houses of the privileged surrounded the little square, and the vines which mantled them in summer blended somewhat motley experiments in architecture into modest harmony. The parsonage, one of the largest of these houses, stood next the church.

The familiar region struck with an odd novelty on Hilda's sense. The walk from Lincoln Street to Webster Place had taken her little more than half an hour. First had come street after street inexpressibly sordid, the natural home, as it seemed to Hilda in her bitterness, of the noisy human animal. Here, in riot of physical existence, unlovely children coagulated in knots upon pavement and road, while an endless stream of blank-faced elders pushed

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anxious way through the yielding eddies of child-life. On either side, like walls of a mountain cañon, rose enormous buildings, plastered with cheap ornament, whither, tier above tier, the seething throng of humanity retired to its lairs at night. Pressing onward, Hilda soon reached a deserted region, where dreary warehouses reared immense sinister surfaces against the day. Five minutes more, and she emerged on the great artery of commerce. Here many of the results of the activities she had left behind were enticingly displayed behind plate-glass windows to a gay procession of shoppers. A long bridge across railroad tracks, and the rush and roar of trains, then, — silence.

The dignified city of her youth rose about her, — a city of prosperous and pleasant homes, of attractive churches, of noble public buildings, of tranquil, sunny streets. Wayfarers were fewer here and less in a hurry; bewitching children, in apparel quaint and dainty as love could devise, trotted chirping and chattering beside their foreign nurses.

"Poverty and wealth, labor and luxury, connected, or divided, by commerce," mused Hilda grimly. "I have walked straight through our civilization. Religion apparently," with a sudden smile as she found herself at the richly carved porch of the church she sought, "on the side of wealth."

Yes, Dr. Wilkinson was in, said the serious

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person who answered her ring; and Hilda found herself in an equally serious library, where rows of well-bound theology, poetry, and *belles lettres* formed a suitable background to green leather and good ecclesiastical art. A moment, and her hand was in the cordial grasp of a tall man, clean-shaven, benignant in aspect, courteous in manner.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Miss Lathrop," said Dr. Wilkinson. "I know your mother well. And if I am not mistaken, I know you a little, too; at least, I know your angel."

He smiled charmingly into Hilda's bewildered eyes: "It was yours, I think? The angel's head that I liked so much in the last exhibition of the Cuthbert Club. That was a lovely thing, the eyes mourning as with the sorrows of humanity, and the triumphant smile on the lips."

Hilda flushed with gratification. "Thank you, Dr. Wilkinson," she said. "I had great pleasure in painting that angel. But it seems now as if he had visited me in another stage of existence. Perhaps you do not know that I am living at Langley House this winter."

"No, I did not;" they were sitting in two of the deep leather chairs; the doctor's manner was interested and curious. "I am sorry to hear it, if the life interferes with your art. But tell me, what are they doing down there? Do you think that they are really accomplishing anything?"

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"In what sense do you mean, Dr. Wilkinson?"

"I mean, are these women really making profound or lasting impression in that neighborhood? Are they uplifting many of those degraded people? Are they bringing souls to Christ?"

A light circumflex accent added a hint of incredulity to the solicitude in Dr. Wilkinson's voice. Hilda might have adduced the evidence of a saloon-keeper, who had announced during the last week that either he or that damned Langley House must leave the street. But other words rose to her lips: —

"I sometimes think Christ would find himself more at home with 'those degraded people' than with us." She regretted the swift sentence even as it flew away, noting the doctor's expression of pained surprise. He said nothing.

"I mean," — Hilda stumbled a little, her mental vision fixed rather on the receding figure of the doctor than on the word-path she should follow in pursuit of him; — "I mean that we who are well fed and sheltered and haunted by no spectre of starvation may well feel that certain primary debts must be paid before we are in a position to offer, or they to receive, the gifts of salvation."

In the middle of her speech, she had abruptly modulated the over-strenuous tones of her voice to studied gentleness.

The doctor's dignified face was grave and sad.

"My dear Miss Lathrop," he said, "I feel in

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what you say the modern taint of materialism, — only too common, only too common! The Church itself is infected by it. There is a grievous amount of self-deception abroad. Shall I tell you what is the origin of all this external institutional work undertaken by religious bodies, — of much of this so-called social action? It springs straight from the Agnostic movement which has been eating into society for the last fifty years. It is an attempt to evade the permanent, the vital thing, — and that is the personal religion of our fathers. For the real, undying concern of man is to escape sin and save his soul."

"It is surprising, however," reflected Hilda, "to realize how very little Christ said about saving one's soul."

Dr. Wilkinson looked surprised. "Ye must be born again," he quoted solemnly. "Only by spiritual regeneration can poor sin-stained humanity be uplifted. Our modern methods simply multiply agencies for cleansing the outside of the cup and platter. Depend upon it, religious work is in the long run the only kind that pays."

Hilda's spirit was too bruised and wounded with recent memories to do justice either to the doctor's earnestness or to any elements of truth in his position. Her recoil from his words erected at once a hopeless barrier between them. A whim of Janet's darted through her mind as she listened; "I wish that Lincoln Street would organize a

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series of revival meetings for the benefit of uptown," her friend had said.

"I am inclined to think some of our neighbors are more competent to do religious work than I am," she replied to the doctor. "Religious exhortation would come more gracefully from me if the material balance were not so evidently in my favor."

Dr. Wilkinson shook his head. "Beware of sentimentality!" he sighed. "Analyze poverty, and what do you find behind it? Drunkenness and thriftlessness. Nothing but a change of heart will cure these things; evangelistic methods are the only fundamental ones. As for this alleged distress," — his voice grew soothingly confidential, — "let me assure you that the reports are much exaggerated. I am convinced that they are put in the papers by those scamps, the labor leaders."

Hilda felt a passing amusement. Mr. O'Hagan, president of the Central Labor Union in Brenton, had been fulminating at Langley House the night before against a capitalist press that inserted nothing favorable to labor.

"Dr. Wilkinson," — she was unconscious of the slight asperity in her tone, — "I heard that you were invited to the mayor's meeting which is to discuss municipal workshops for the unemployed this evening, and I am here because I hoped that you would let me tell you a few facts that have come under my personal observation."

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"Why certainly," the doctor assented with good cheer. "Facts are what we want in this excited state of feeling. Some people are in danger of getting a little morbid. It is highly important to keep sane and avoid exaggeration."

"We are convinced at Langley House," Hilda went on, "that the need this winter is not only genuine but desperate. A succession of wretched people invade the House. They have exhausted all their resources, they press on us, they — "

"Wait a moment! Do let me reassure you, my dear," — there was gentle authority in Dr. Wilkinson's uplifted hand. "I can tell you from my presumably wider outlook how things really stand. I sit in my study, — a minister is a kind of a priest, you know, — and people in distress know that they have a friend here. They come to me almost every day. I hear stories that you would never hear, nor Langley House either. Now in almost every case, examination reveals a moral cause for these troubles. Of course, there are deserving poor; my agent, a very shrewd woman, reports to me twice a week on those in our parish. But she and I are persons of experience, who know how to sift cases, and I assure you, and I hope that I shall set your mind at rest, that, barring accidents, those who complain deserve what they get."

Did he actually think that? Hilda wondered, and some of her wonder crept into her tones, as she inquired: —

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"You believe in general then, Dr. Wilkinson, that the poor are morally inferior to the rich, and that this is the cause of their poverty?"

The doctor never flinched. "I certainly do," he replied, and his face kindled with genuine conviction, as he continued: "This sentimental socialism that is in the air menaces our democracy in its most sacred liberties. The bracing air of our country offers free play to every individual, and encourages every capacity. If people fail, it is because they have not the qualities that command success. As Christians, we must pity and serve them, but we must not interfere with laws which act righteously, if severely, in putting them where they are. The classes of privilege, so-called," he went on with increasing feeling, "are where they are through honesty, energy, and intelligence. I confess, Miss Lathrop, that a large share of my sympathy goes out to them. Their sensitive natures are tortured by a compassion really often a little or more than a little morbid, and the claims made on them are literally without end. Look at the works of my parish! A mission chapel, a House of Mercy, a laundry, a kindergarten, two missionaries in China, one in India, one in Alaska,— and think of the contributions made to home and foreign missions beside! All out of the personal, legitimate wealth of my congregation! I tell them that their noble generosity lives before the Throne of God."

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A vision of the equipages of the congregation visited Hilda. A phrase from some novel was rapping in her brain. "The survival of the fittest, in a world in which it is hardly an honor to survive."

"The benefactions of our country," Dr. Wilkinson was continuing, "are immense. Just think of the sums which education and philanthropy have received from bequests alone within the last ten years. Our admirably organized charities are adequate to meet all honest need. Broadly speaking, in our free country such poverty as exists, except among newly arrived emigrants, is the warning of God, and a stern but righteous judgment."

Were we not sustained by the illusion that it is possible to change men's attitude by argument, what silence would fall upon the race! Hilda was eager still.

"When Christ found people hungry, whether the fault was theirs or not, he fed them first and preached to them afterward," she remarked.

"Do not I feed the hungry?" Dr. Wilkinson queried. "Here" — he touched an envelope on his desk — "is a check for fifty dollars, received just now from a parishioner, to buy Easter dinners for the poor of the parish. Genuine distress is never turned away from this door." And in this statement he was speaking truly, for, as Hilda knew, he was in private life a generous man.

She made one more effort; her manner was tense,

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and the doctor frowned in a weary fashion as the rapid words poured forth: "Dr. Wilkinson, these people who come to us are not the decorous poor who would apply to you, or whom your agent would meet. They are the throngs of the forgotten, — plain working-people, who in ordinary times need no relief, or, in any case, don't ask for it. It has never occurred to them to apply for charity any more than it has to your daughters," — the doctor's frown deepened; "many of them do not even know what the charitable agencies of the city are. They are not the submerged tenth. The black need that writhes in the social depths is not very far away from them, but usually it does not overwhelm them. To-day it is rising, rising, and they don't know where to turn. It is a pitiful sight. We have not only to think how to help them, but also how to preserve their self-respect."

Dr. Wilkinson broke in upon her rapid speech. "What do these people want from you? Money, is n't it?" he queried almost sharply.

Hilda shook her head. "No," she answered with emphasis; "not money. In various cases, money has been refused when we offered it. They want work."

"Have n't they savings?" The doctor's voice had acquired the note of cross-examination.

"Many of them have been out of work six months, and — "

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"You mentioned facts a short time ago. I am after facts. How many have savings?"

"I have had no time of late to collect statistics," said Hilda with spirit. "But I know that few of them have any savings left."

"Savings-banks show" — he was trying to reassure both himself and his hearer — "that vast sums of money are deposited by the mechanic class."

"That means little unless one has some notion of proportion. Do you know how large a proportion of mechanics in the city are depositors?"

The doctor was silent.

"The savings from a mechanic's income cannot be very large —"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted the doctor.

"And the hard times have continued some months. Savings are exhausted."

The fretful line deepened in the doctor's face, though he spoke with careful patience. "I repeat," he said, "that there is a great deal of morbid feeling abroad. I have seen preposterous statistics to the effect that thirty thousand workmen are out of work in this city."

"You mean the statistics collected by the University Settlement?"

"Yes. Those figures are absurd on the face of them. I consider them absolutely false."

"They were collected with great care," said Hilda

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gently. She did not add, as she might have done, that they had been systematically understated, and that, based on returns from the unions, they left out of account the unorganized hordes of the unskilled.

"I deny those figures *in toto*," Dr. Wilkinson was reiterating.

"May I ask on what ground?" Hilda seemed powerless to exorcise the note of argument from her voice.

"If they were true" — the doctor spoke impressively — "there would not be a baker's shop unraided in this city."

"Is this the self-control with which you credit men after nineteen hundred years of Christianity?" queried Hilda.

"Self-control and Christianity take wings pretty quickly when starvation is swooping down on them," returned the doctor.

Hilda was silent. As so often happens, depths of thought were surging below the surface ebb and flow of talk. She mused on the terrible patience of the poor — that patience wherein the dim inherited hope of a heavenly future blended so strangely with the apathy of depleted nerves. But Dr. Wilkinson was waiting for her to speak.

"I spent yesterday afternoon in the Central Labor Union," she said. Dr. Wilkinson almost stared; this was not a spot frequented by young ladies of his acquaintance. "The scene was very dramatic.

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There was some violent speaking, I confess, coming mostly from men who could hardly make themselves understood in English. But it was a wonderful thing to see how their leaders controlled them. I felt a better woman for listening to Mr. Abrams and Mr. O'Hagan. As long as those men keep their present influence," — a little hesitation checked her voice as the stormy scene recurred to her, — "the unions at least will realize that violence is suicidal."

Dr. Wilkinson was shaking his head. "Human nature would n't stand it," he said positively.

"Perhaps it will not long," murmured Hilda, *sotto voce.*

Aloud she said, "Are you going to the mayor's meeting, Dr. Wilkinson?"

"Yes, I think so;" the doctor looked at his watch; "I have a library committee at 4.15, — ahem! in ten minutes; Committee of Christian Endeavor at 5. My daughter is giving a tea, — I promised to look in at it, — I have an important committee meeting at 7.30 to discuss a new window in the east transept; and there 's a poor fellow in the hospital with a broken leg whom I ought to get to see to-day. But I did promise the mayor that I 'd drop in on his meeting if I could manage it."

"What shall you recommend?"

"I shall keep my mouth tight shut," said the doctor emphatically, "except on one possible emergency. A great responsibility rests on those of us

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who have a strong sane sense of justice, Miss Lathrop."

Hilda nodded, applauding the sentiment, awaiting the application.

"Few people realize the terrible burden which rests in these anxious times on the employing class. It is our duty to see that this burden is not increased in any way; that no rash experiments should be tried; that nothing be done, for the sake of relieving a supposed distress, to violate the sound principles of economics, or the fundamentals of our government and society. I shall say nothing at the meeting to-night," — Dr. Wilkinson spoke almost solemnly, — "unless it were proposed that the city should extend charitable aid, whether or no disguised in the form of work, to the so-called unemployed. In that case, I should fervidly enter my protest."

"The people are starving," mourned Hilda.

"It is impossible, — here I plant my feet upon the ground," — Dr. Wilkinson spoke with evident earnest conviction. "It is impossible for any human being to starve in our free country. It has never happened. It can never happen."

Hilda looked full at him. "I have seen it," she said simply.

"I repeat that it is impossible," — the doctor still had the exalted air of one loyal, against heavy odds, to the traditions of his fathers.

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"Good-by, Dr. Wilkinson," said Hilda.

"Good-by," — her hand was once more, rather against her will, in that reassuring clasp. "I am very glad to have met you. Don't drop your painting. I trust that you will not feel that you put me in an antagonistic mood. I am not antagonistic, not at all, in regard to these grave questions. I am deeply troubled about them; my friends are the business men of the city, who look at them in a large way, and I look at them so, too. If you want my help about any individual case of distress, I shall be glad to have it investigated. The truth is, my dear Miss Lathrop, I have to be on guard against my own sentiment. If we forfeit our sanity, all our power for good is lost, you know. I have to keep myself in hand with all the power of my will; I simply repress myself. Take courage, my dear young lady; we live in a Christian civilization."

"Do we? Good-by, Dr. Wilkinson," said Hilda.

Rapidly, angrily, the girl paced down the long street, flinging broken remarks, pangs of heart, images of reproachful distress, at an imaginary divine. Irrational indignation at her surroundings possessed her. A French poodle, curled as to his front and glistening as to his rear, sniffed at her dress in friendly fashion. Hilda paused, and viewed the petted creature with looks of animosity. "I

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never saw a beast I hated so," she informed him, out of Browning. The shocked expression of the dog's pretty mistress, who caught the words, was balm to her soul.

She had, half unconsciously, come far downtown, but she was still in the fashionable part of the city. Before her the snow swept smoothly from the street to the recessed porch of a church. A wave of home-sickness submerged the girl; the sudden memory was on her of ancient buildings which, in her European girlhood, had opened their hearts to receive the solitary little alien, estray from distant lands and a race unknown. Could she but enter and rest, and merge her insistent present pain in the fellowship of the past sorrows and yearnings of humanity, whispering through dim aisles or hovering about the altar! She tried the church door; it was severely locked, as behooved a Puritan edifice. Passers eyed the girl's baffled face with surprised disapproval. A certain indecorum attached to the attempt to enter a church on a week-day.

But need was strong upon Hilda, and her feet guided her to an Anglican church not far away, where the daily choral evensong in Lent had been dear to her mother. Entering, she sank on her knees, hiding her hot face with a sense of relief, and automatically sat, rose, and knelt, while ancient prayers and chants drifted past her spirit like clouds past a hilltop in summer. Nine ladies, in

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charming Lenten garb of gray, black, and violet, formed the congregation.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted them of low degree." Two girls in rich furs sang the words softly under their breath, joining the treble of the boy-choristers.

"The Lord looseth men out of prison: the Lord giveth sight to the blind," read an empty-faced young priest, rapidly and monotonously.

"Lo, the poor crieth and the Lord heareth him, and delivereth him out of all his trouble," responded the nine ladies monotonously and rapidly.

Hilda was listening to Dr. Wilkinson's voice. "My indignant sympathy goes out to the rich. Few people realize how heavy a burden rests to-day on the employing class."

"Suppose those great words of the Bible were real!" she exclaimed in her spirit. "Suppose a true congregation were here, — all the people who have been coming to Langley House this last week, — unkempt, haggard, rough. Imagine them hearing and saying those words, — calling out, in faith, upon a great deliverance! And for the priest, — no, not Christ Himself; were He here, there would be deeds before words — "

Her mind wandered for a time in dreary regions. She was aware that the young priest in the pulpit was knocking great words about sin and atonement against each other till they sounded hollow.

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Then another train of thought seized her, not original, but strangely consoling.

"Suppose Christ came into this church; He would be dressed — like Mr. O'Hagan, perhaps. His hands would be workman's hands. How strangely these women would look at Him! What would He say to us? What would we say to Him?"

The sermon was over; the benediction of the peace of God had been invoked in indifferent singsong, a little out of tune, and the congregation dispersed. Hilda remained kneeling, her face in her hands. Her spirit, turning in scorn and loathing from organized Christianity, found itself suddenly at rest in a holy presence.

"What refuge from the Church, — save Christ Himself?" she cried. "Come and save us from Thy Church, O Carpenter of Nazareth!"

In grieving peace she pressed her way back, through the noisy streets thronged with sorrows, to her close tenement.

"Well!" said Janet Frothingham to her that evening. "Did your interview with Dr. Wilkinson increase your hope that the Church holds the key to the social situation?"

But Hilda turned the question gently aside, while Mildred Ellis eyed her watchfully and wistfully.

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CHAPTER IX

THE LABOR LEADER

A PITIFUL, prolonged, bitter strike was "on" in the factories of the town of Lynton. The men, finding days idle on their hands, strayed at times into the city, and found their way now and then to Langley House. At first, they were exhilarated; as the interminable weeks dragged on, they became haggard. They had struck against a falling market; on the other hand, their organization was strong, and they had tenacity.

Their grievances disappointed Hilda's dramatic sense: they were not, at first sight, particularly tragic, and they were very hard to understand. They concerned details: the system of fines, the demand that employees buy their implements of agents of the company; special regulations affecting special classes of workers. But below all these details lay, she came to see, one grim issue: the question of the right to organize. To this the more intelligent strikers clung with religious desperation. This the employers, ready for the rest to make certain minor concessions, repudiated with energetic contempt.

At first Hilda, new to the problems of the labor

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world, found the situation rather bleak. She would have preferred terrible, tangible injustice and brutality: little children toiling in physical peril, men at home rocking the cradle while the less expensive women went to the factory. Such things did not exist among the fairly prosperous workers of Lynton. Before the cruel strike was over, indeed, misery that more than satisfied her appetite for melodrama came to her knowledge. Meanwhile, what most impressed her as time went on was the splendid loyalty of the strikers to an abstract idea: the cost at which so fine a product of civilization as the power to preserve solidarity under stress had been evolved by the unions from a crowd of comparatively ignorant people, whose conditions would seem to leave free play for no impulse above self-preservation. Her emotion bowed, amazed and reverent, whatever the verdict of her reason, when the workers in the Ross factory, who had, by their own avowal, no personal cause of complaint, went out on a sympathetic strike. When certain of the strikers attested their fierce fidelity to the union principle by knocking over the head a number of newly imported scabs, her emotions as well as her reason called a halt indeed, but waited for new light.

These two episodes, however, turned the sympathy of the public against the strikers, and in the end determined an adverse result. They also most strongly excited the indignation of Hilda's Cousin

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Howard. That wealthy and cheery gentleman was not himself a manufacturer of the commodity in question, but his interest in certain by-products brought him into close relations with the strike.

Hilda loved her cousin. He had retained through his growing prosperity a natural simplicity of heart as well as of manner; his domestic affections were tender and strong. During the lifetime of a fretful, invalid wife his patient devotion had never faltered. His integrity in the business world was above reproach, his generosity noteworthy.

Mr. Howard Brown liked his erratic young cousin, partly for her own sake, partly, as Hilda dimly surmised, for the sake of her mother, who had been the playmate of his boyhood. He was always ready to discuss with Hilda, after a benignant, half-amused fashion, as they sat around his softly lighted dinner-table, — the daughters, marvelling that papa and Hilda could care about such dull matters, exchanging under their breath their latest experiences at golf.

"A fine mess they 're making of it out at Lynton, Hilda," he said one night, as the salad was served.

"Is the strike likely to be lost, do you think?" asked Hilda. She had much respect for her cousin's knowledge of industrial matters.

"Lost! Of course it will be lost! The danger is that more than the strike will be lost!"

"What do you mean?" the girl asked anxiously.

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"The employers can't yield the men's demands, if they want to," replied he.

"Could n't they yield a few? It needs more technical knowledge than I have to follow the thing; but I should think it would be policy on the part of the employers to recognize the justice of those criticisms on the fine system."

"Why yes; they could yield in one or two details. The men know that as well as the masters. Those are only a blind. The real question at issue" — Cousin Howard's benevolent face was a trifle flushed — "is whether the employers are to be dictated to by the unions. It 's the principle at the heart of American enterprise that 's at stake. It 's industrial freedom."

"What do you mean by saying that more may be lost than the strike?" Hilda knew well enough her cousin's views about trade-unions.

"I hate to see you misled, child," Mr. Brown replied after a moment of hesitation, "and your friends at Langley House can do a lot of harm without knowing it. I can't explain the whole matter to you. But any one with half an eye can see that the Lynton employers are in a tight place. Foreign competition is fierce just now. And there 's pressure — I tell you this in confidence, though it will soon be an open secret — from a new trust forming in the West. Our men here are standing out for the old American principle, — free compe-

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tition, honest scope for individual enterprise. Moreover — "

Through pudding, ices, and fruit, Cousin Howard went on expounding the situation, with a mastery of details that opened to Hilda widening vistas of industrial horizons. A clear picture developed before her of the state of the market. She realized as never before the magnitude of the interests involved, and factors in the situation, ignored or unguessed by the strikers, became evident to her in overwhelming numbers.

"And this is the time," Cousin Howard concluded, after sketching a peculiarly critical situation, "that the men choose to strike! Short-sighted fools! Whether they win or lose, they are likely to bring ruin on themselves. Working-men are children, nothing but children, Hilda. A friend of mine last year — I don't mind telling you, it was Mr. Ross — was thinking of introducing profit-sharing into his shops. 'All very well to share profits,' I said to him, 'but how about a bad year? Can you trust your men to share losses?' No, he could n't — and there you have it! The men have n't self-control to share the slightest pressure when the concern 's in danger. They 're a self-seeking, ignorant crew!"

"But the men don't know that the concern 's in danger!" cried Hilda. "Have n't you just told me that the negotiations are secret? Why not call them together, and explain the situation?"

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Mr. Brown broke in impatiently: "To them and to the competitors?" he said. "That's about as far as a woman sees. Secrecy is the first essential. My dear child, don't be foolish. This matter is out of the range of sentiment. Business is a battlefield. The men ought to have a reasonable trust in their leaders. But after all" — his natural kindliness of expression darkened a little — "it's not their fault entirely. They are children, as I said. It's the fault of those unprincipled scamps, the labor leaders."

"Don't call names, Cousin Howard." Hilda patted his hand affectionately. "Several of those scamps are my very good friends."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself," the old man replied, looking at her with genuine distress. "Your very good friends are men without the first instinct of justice. Look at that factory of Ross's. By their own confession, the employees haven't a grievance. He's the most generous of employers; they were a set of honest, prosperous, peaceful workmen, till those blackguard agitators who go about interfering between masters and men got hold of them. That man O'Hagan — I hope he's not a friend of yours; he's a dangerous character — goes out and harangues them. They forget decent loyalty to their employer; they forget their own advantage. Out they all go. It's like a madness."

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"Don't you think motives strong enough to make people forget their own advantage are interesting things?" asked Hilda, smiling into the honest eyes.

Cousin Howard's face hardened. "I suppose that you think a mob heaving bricks at a faithful laborer who is using his right as a free American to make his private and independent contract with the company is also an interesting thing."

"Of course I don't defend violence," retorted Hilda, impatient in her turn. "On the battlefield, though, you call it heroism."

"That 's in warfare."

"Did n't you just say that business is a battlefield? The difficulty in a strike is that the men are supposed to observe the laws of peace while they are roused by all the passions of war. Why, the thing 's impossible. The only wonder is, they control themselves so long. The strike has lasted six weeks. There has been just one episode of violence; and up rises the whole sect of the Pharisees against the strikers! Oh, oh, I did n't mean to call you a Pharisee, dear Cousin Howard," cried Hilda, remorseful.

Conversation was a little strained after this, and Hilda was glad to escape into the winter streets. She walked rapidly homeward, talking to herself in an eager undertone, after an odd fashion she had.

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"Now, I'm sorry I used that expression. A Pharisee you are not, my dear cousin, but a loyal gentleman. And you certainly understand the situation better than the men do. But how blind you are to the human aspects of the matter! Can't you see how unequal a fight it is? What reason has American history given American workmen to trust their employers? If the rank and file can't know the facts, why not confide in the leaders the men do trust, — in the organizers?" Hilda smiled to herself. "Now, why should that be so absurd?" she went on in her mental colloquy. "Because the working-men are so unreasonable, you say? Well, I suppose they do refuse to recognize the risks of capital. And I suppose they will keep on refusing so long — why, so long as you continue to live in Webster Avenue, and they in Lynton tenements. Don't you see how that great, sharp contrast is in their minds forever, — never to be gotten over? Why should it exist? No, it is n't because you are so much cleverer that you deserve all that luxury, my dear cousin. I hate to tell you so, but you know you are really rather a dull man, my dear; not the least bit in the world above the average man. Your money is the reward of abstinence? How I used to cudgel my brains over that, and wonder what in the world Uncle Howard ever abstained from! But he gave you a better education, — a better start in the world. Yes, exactly! And then what becomes

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of the Declaration of Inde——. Oh! ah! Mr. O'Hagan, I beg your pardon!"

Hilda smiled brightly at the "blackguard agitator," against whom she had bumped with some vehemence.

"Say, I've just been to your place," responded Mr. O'Hagan, pausing in his loose-limbed stride to beam chivalrously down upon her. "You were n't there."

"I've been dining with my cousin, Mr. Howard Brown, talking about the strike."

"Howard Brown! Is he a cousin of yours?" said Mr. O'Hagan, frowning. "And you've gone to live in Lincoln Street!" His hearty laugh, full of genuine amusement, rang loud on the decorous air.

"Say," he went on, "I've got to go now. I'm due at a meeting of the garment-workers; there's another meeting of the railway men, too, at eleven P. M. They're in a little difficulty, and I said I'd happen round. But I'll tell you what. I'm going down to Lynton to-morrow evening to address the strikers, and I told Miss Abbott that if she'd like to come along, she could bring any of the folks she liked. You come down with her, and we'll have a good chance to talk on the train."

"Thank you, I will," agreed Hilda, and made her way forward full of glee at the thought of how Cousin Howard's mouth would curl, should he hear of the projected expedition.

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"Mr. O'Hagan does n't spare himself," she meditated. "I think I see Cousin Howard giving up the night watches to meetings, in the interests of what cause soever. Mr. O'Hagan and Mr. Connelly do it all the time. They have to, I suppose. Wage-slaves are only free when the world 's asleep."

It was a tense meeting at Lynton. Hilda, a little daunted at finding herself on the platform with the delegates from various distant unions, soon lost self-consciousness in her deep interest. Here was no audience assembled, with a pleasurable sense of leisure and virtue, to indulge cultivated tastes or religious sentiments. The sea of upturned faces before her in the bare hall, quiet enough, but with an underlook watchful to fierceness, seemed tragic, alien. A sharp sense of reality smote on her. This throng was bent on an issue of life or death; they were not commenting on life, they were living, breathless. Such a throng she had never seen before.

Mr. O'Hagan's speech was full, after his wont, of rude power and eloquence. It glowed with a radiant good-humor that captivated his audience; it pictured the abstract with a wealth of metaphor often ludicrously mixed, but always appealing; it took swift turns from invective to tenderness, from tenderness to fun.

His special object, as he had carefully explained

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coming down on the train, was to instil a sense of the necessity of order, and prevent a repetition of the violence that had so alienated the public.

"I want to tell you something, my friends," said Mr. O'Hagan, leaning over the little desk with intimate earnestness. "You 've got to get the public on your side. If you don't, the enemy will charge on you, and roll you up in a scroll, and defeat you. It will take your branch of peace and stab you in the back with a poisoned dagger. Who determines whether the cause of labor rises or sinks? The employer? No! The workmen? No! The public, every time. Oh, it 's a merciful thing, the public, with its fine sense of justice, and its precious brains. You don't find the employer pulling wool over the public's brains, — oh, no! You live along quietly year after year, on a wage that keeps you and your family about half fed, that forces you to send your daughters, when they 're fresh and young, to spend their daylight in a factory, and take your boys out of school before ever the law allows, and keeps your wife an anxious drudge all her days: does the public care? Is its sense of justice offended? No; that 's all right! Your employer's wife and children and your employer's pastor go to Europe in their summer vacation, and they come back in the autumn, and wonder why the masses don't come to church, and maybe they start a mission; that 's all right!

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"You get tired of eating crow, and by and by you get up and you say your burdens are too heavy; you won't be able to make life so pleasant for them, if they don't ease up on you a bit, and you ask this, and you ask that, and you ask the other. And the public listens, and it says, perhaps, — 'Well, that 's so; perhaps those poor devils do have rather a hard time of it. Of course, they can't expect to have things very nice nor pleasant, like we do. They can't expect no travel, nor education, nor music, nor time to see each other, nor pretty homes, nor all that; why they 're the under-dogs, and the under-dogs they 'll stay, for does n't the apostle say the things as be is ordained of God, and the poor we have always with us? But perhaps they are pressed just a leetle too hard. We 've got for to see they keep strong enough to work, you know.' And then if it comes out that a few of you have been starved to death, or broken up in machines, why the public will take to thinking of you real pleasant like. But" — there was a change in the rich voice — "if you want them to keep on feeling that pleasant way, look out, my friends. No violence! Do you hear me? We must n't have no violence in this strike. No slinging bricks at the nice innocent workman, who 's going to get your jobs. I mean what I say," he shouted, as a suppressed snarl ran through the house. "What happened on Green Street last Friday?"

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Voices broke out here and there; men and women rose to their feet: "'T was n't us! 'T was n't no one in the unions!" The hubbub deepened. A Russian Jew was noisily exclaiming from the back of the room something about a "damned scab." A florid man near the front was bellowing indistinguishable sentences, and finally overtopped the efforts of his neighbors to quiet him with the emphatic remark: "It 's not true, nor never was, nor never will be, that no one can stop me off when I want to talk!" O'Hagan stood with folded arms, gazing half humorously over the tumult for about half a minute, in perfect silence; then, flinging his hand out with an emphatic gesture, commanded instant stillness.

"I know all about it. You listen to me." His voice was low and firm. "We must have none of this. Oh," the commanding note slipped into a tone of deep and yearning pity, "don't you go for to think it 's me as would blame you. Don't you suppose I know the sacrifices you have made, — the children hungry, — the little home broken up, — the days idle on your hands? And you 're standing round in the street wondering how it will end, — thinkin', thinkin'; and you see the man skulking by who 's goin' to make all that useless? He 'll not let his family suffer. It 's nothing to him what other families suffer. He 'll take the wages of a slave and lick the foot that kicks him, and snatch your job as fast as he can get it. He 's going to look out for num-

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ber one, every time. Don't I know the feeling in your heart toward him?"

A hiss and moan ran through the house; faces were drawn and gray.

"But — it — won't — do, my friends," O'Hagan went on. His face was wan; he spoke in a low, inward tone, deliberate and solemn; then suddenly brought his fist on the table with a mighty crash: "You must n't show that hatred. You must n't try to stop that man. Oh, you may stand and look at him, hundreds strong, as he goes to work; you may point your fingers at him in silence; yes, you may file up and watch him pass; you may hiss him, if you like.

> "Be your strong and simple words
> Keen to wound as sharpened swords."

But stop there. No violence. If you heave one little brick, if you stop one single sneak on his way to the shop, you lose the public. The public is a law-abiding body. You 've got to see this thing through without violation of the law. You can't afford to make the public angry, you can't afford to give the employers that pull. I tell you, if you don't want to lose the strike, *let the scab alone.*"

In the train going home, Mr. O'Hagan was to all seeming a mere sunken and slouched heap of flesh, exhaustion showing in every curve. Hilda, who sat with him, did not address him, till suddenly, half-

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way to the city, he drew a long breath, sat upright, and turned to her, with a pallid, inquiring smile.

"Well, Miss Lathrop," he said.

"Mr. O'Hagan," said Hilda courageously, directly, a bit sternly, "do you approve of violence?"

He stared at her, perplexed. "What did I speak about? Did n't I do all I could for to prevent it?" he queried.

"You seemed to say" — the girl was still unblenching and severe — "that the only reason you did n't approve of shooting those scabs was because the public did n't like it. Any one would think you would be glad to have them shot down, if it were not inexpedient."

O'Hagan looked up at her under his eyebrows. "I should," he said.

Hilda gasped.

The man's face was alive again, his frame alert.

"What 's a scab?" he queried, peering with compelling energy into her eyes. "Did you ever think? When you was a little girl in school, I suppose they learned you about Benedict Arnold. Did your teacher tell you to be sorry for the fate of a traitor? What does a traitor deserve?"

"That is in warfare," hazarded Hilda weakly, forgetting her own contention with Cousin Howard.

"Oh, my God, what have we got here?" cried Mr. O'Hagan. "The cruellest war ever fought,

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with the most unequal odds. Look here," he placed the combatants dramatically in the air, with a gesture; "here 's the employing class, and it stands armed with a mighty big gun, called Starvation, all ready to shoot the poor down. Yes. Well, now, here are the wage-slaves: what have they got in their hands? Why, it 's something the employer don't like, to be sure, but it ain't deadly, though it may be unpleasant: its name is Fear-of-Bankruptcy! That 's all. That 's the worst thing they can threaten the employers with, and no one can say as it 's so bad as starvation. Now there 's just one thing can hold the wage-slaves together and give them a fair show in the fight, and that 's the union. Yes, sir. The union is the church of the working-man."

"The unions are all right, Mr. O'Hagan," said Hilda determinedly. "I believe in them and I honor them. But they have n't any business to turn tyrants themselves, and persecute a man who does n't choose to join them. A free country won't stand that. Mr. Howard Brown is perfectly right when he says that the workman on American soil has a right to refuse to join an organization when he likes, and to make free contracts when he pleases."

"Yes, — you 'd love a union in white kids, would n't you, though?" sneered O'Hagan. "The unions are all right, say you, as long as they 're ineffective. Did you ever think," he went on more patiently, "what it means to get a crowd like

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we saw to-night to organize? to persuade them to pay their dues regular, year in and year out, even if they 're sailin' pretty near the wind, while the wolf howls at the door? We 've got to make the rights and needs of all a religion to them, and there they are, of different races, hating each other, likely; of different churches, ignorant as you please. How are you going to bind a crowd like that together in loyalty, onless you give them the feeling that the man as won't join is an outcast? They 've got to hate the scab pretty bad, else when the time of trial comes, like this here strike, they 'll all be turning scabs themselves. — You must n't let them shoot the scabs, though, nor throw stones at them; no, nor even call them bad names. I know that as well as you do."

He paused, gazed gloomily at the girl beside him, in her immaculate gray suit and cleanly, vigorous grace. Suddenly he resumed: —

"Lord! how innocent you are! — Look here," — the characters appeared upon his knees as he spoke. "Here you are, a worker, and you belong to the union; it 's your religion, remember, and you 're out on this strike. Perhaps you were n't in such a mighty bad fix yourself, but you 've got some real grievances, and there 's others you know have more and worse, grieviances as had n't ought to be borne, and the strike is ordered, and out you go. You tug, the employers tug; weeks go by, months go by. You 're

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anxious by day and you 're anxious by night. Your savings melt. You grow a little faint-like and queer in your insides. Worse than that, your wife, she 's growing white about the lips, and maybe she scolds you, and the baby whines. But you keep on tuggin', just the same. And you hear how the employers is gettin' tired : the big factories, they stand idle, and that Fear-of-Bankruptcy is p'inting at them pretty sharp, and you hope the cursed thing will be off soon. Now, look this way, — here comes along a man, a foreigner, maybe, and he 's a worker in your trade, and he wants to steal your job. He 's got low-down ways of living, and he 'll take the mean conditions you said you could n't stand. That 's all right, if he wants to be a slave ; you don't object ; but he 'll drag you, and all the men of the union, back with him into slavery ; he 'll force those conditions on all of you. Ain't that tyranny ? Ain't that interferin' with the rights of the individual, I 'd like to know ? Ain't it a worser tyranny than you show when you stop him ? Oh, you would n't stop him, you say ; no, you 'd go to him and say, ' Good-day, brother. I 'm your Christian brother, and I 'll show you the way to the factory.' Would you, now ? Not you ! Would n't you hate him ? Would n't you suppress him ? Oh Lord ! "

Hilda felt O'Hagan's large frame tense beside her. She turned suddenly pallid. It seemed all but hopeless to urge the maxims of the Sermon on the

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Mount upon these primitive emotions! Especially as she recognized in the man's words the forces, more or less disguised, which determine the very constitution of society. She fell into silence and watched, from out the window, the flashing purity of a star, that, gleaming fitfully through white smoke-wreaths, seemed to keep steady pace with the motion of the train. Was our earth, with its surging passions, a tiny symbol of radiant peace to some wrathful, pain-stricken soul on yonder point of light? she wondered.

"Mr. O'Hagan," she said at last; "tell me what you think of the sympathetic strike."

A gentle look came over the man's strong, rugged face.

"The sympathetic strike!" he said slowly. "It's the holiest expression of brotherhood that the world has seen. . . .

"Think, Miss Lathrop. Look at them men at Ross's. Were they ill off? Not they. They had their tidy little homes; their children were in school; they received a fair and steady wage. And the cry reached them of their brothers in Lynton, — out of work half the year, underpaid, weak, — starting on a great fight. What could they do to help? Why, if they went out, and the raw material was shut away, 't would make matters no end harder for the Lynton employers. They met an' had a long discussion. Oh, they faced the thing fair. 'T was

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their own doing, 't was no orders from headquarters took them out. I was down, to be sure, and told them how the council felt it would be an immense help in Lynton if they went out; but the decision was left to them, and they voted to go out. There was n't but a small minority of opposing votes. If this strike is won, it 'll be due to them. Ain't that fine?"

"It is hard on Mr. Ross, though," said Hilda gently.

Mr. O'Hagan paused, as if the thought were new to him.

"Well, it was," he admitted slowly. "Ross has always been a fair man. But can't you see, Miss Lathrop, there 's more than Ross at stake. He 's one man. This question involves the welfare of thousands, — indirectly of all the men and women in this trade in this country. And Ross is pretty rich. He has rich relatives, I guess. His wife and children would n't never be made to suffer, no, not if he failed, like the wives and children of those Lynton men have suffered for years, not to speak of the way they 'd suffer if the strike was lost."

Hilda was on the point of explaining that a less degree of deprivation — to be forced to leave a luxurious home for a small one, and to get along, perhaps, with only one servant, for instance — would probably involve more suffering to the delicate organism of Mrs. Ross, than semi-starvation would

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inflict on the wife of a working-man. But she found the matter difficult to put convincingly to Mr. O'Hagan, and indeed a little sensation that seemed something like shame stopped the explanation on her lips.

Yet her companion felt, seemingly, something unsympathetic in her silence, for presently he broke forth: —

"It ain't no use, Miss Lathrop; you can't understand us; you might just as well let the poor alone. The working-people has got to work out their own salvation. No one that has n't shared their struggle can help them. Life 's dainty to you rich. You live in your pretty rooms and think your pretty thoughts, and you go to your pretty churches and hear pretty sentiments about brotherhood, — much the rich know about their brothers! How should they know? Where do they meet 'em? Look at their churches, — rented pews and soft cushions for the rich, back seats and sniffs for the poor, if they went, which they don't. Look at the colleges: who fills 'em? Our sons and daughters? No; they 're not in the colleges of the land, — the college of the poor man's son is the factory. Look at the government: who runs it? The big men of the big trusts. Say, I heard some one down to Langley House one night talking about the Two Nations; and I thought, Right you are! Two nations, sure! and no communication between the two. One nation

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is giving its heart's blood to nourish the other, though," whispered O'Hagan, bending very close to Hilda; "but the blood runs through underground channels, and you don't none of you stop for to ask where it comes from!"

Hilda repressed a shiver.

"You have no right to talk that way about the rich," she said with emphasis. "They are more awake to their responsibility every year. Look at the immense sum given to charity; the libraries, art museums, hospitals, relief works, — all from the rich, all for the people. If rich men make their money by hard means, — I don't doubt they do, — they spend it generously in America to-day."

Mr. O'Hagan looked at her askance: —

"Do you know what these big gifts mean?" Once more the massive face bent very near her own. "They 're hush-money."

"Nonsense!" said Hilda, shocked.

"Fact. What did the American millionaire do with his money in the last generation?" queried Mr. O'Hagan. "Built palaces and yachts. What is he doing to-day? Endowing universities. Why? Is he a better man? Don't you believe it! He may be a mite smitten in conscience here and there, I don't deny that, but his reason is clear enough. How many professors in the universities endowed by Mr. Kraut, are going to speak out, do you suppose, in the cause of industrial freedom? eh? How

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many clergy take the side of the poor openly in a struggle like this strike? I know just one, — Father Phillips, of Stonyton. You ever meet him?"

Hilda made a gesture of denial.

"Ah! there 's a man for you! Not that I blame the others, poor creatures. Say," — there was a curious tang, half pitying, half contemptuous, in the labor leader's tone, — "I 'm awful sorry for clergymen. I know some of 'em, they come and talk to me," — he imitated a pleading tenor: "'O'Hagan, my dear friend, if you would only come to church and lay aside your bitterness of spirit,' — "

Mr. O'Hagan threw back his head, and laughed, — not a pleasant laugh.

"Poor men! They mean well!" he went on, — "But it's funny, you know. They have a lot of sympathy for the poor, some of 'em, they really have, and they see clear enough where the justice of Christ would lie. But what can they do? They 've got to draw their salaries. They 're all subsidized by the rich, and most of 'em are married men with families. No, I don't blame 'em. They can't say out what they think. Their handsome churches are built by the rich, — their choirs are supported by the rich. Lord bless you," he concluded, with an accent of finality: "the poor ain't got nothin' to do with your fine religion and learning in this country! You leave us alone, — that 's all we ask of you, — and let the big fight come on."

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Hilda felt tempted to silence, but roused herself with an effort.

"You can't lump the rich in one class, and condemn them, any more than you can the poor," she said strenuously. "I know one or two saints among the rich, — the simplest, the purest, the most self-sacrificing of souls! They can't help it if they are educated, and have always lived in nice houses. They were born that way, and their souls are n't any the worse for it."

"M — m — m — I dare say," said Mr. O'Hagan. "You show me one of them people that would be ready to ask a working-man to tea! They sacrifice themselves, do they? Is there one of them as makes a sacrifice below the line of their own comfort and cleanliness and convenience? Tell me that!"

Hilda's blood boiled with the injustice and the truth of his words, and the pain of it all.

"Your poor would n't be one bit better!" she said obstinately. "You let the working-people get the upper hand, and they 'd behave in precisely the same way."

The train was drawing into the station. Mr. O'Hagan shook his head. "There 's a deal of human nature everywhere," he admitted, as they moved down the aisle, ready, American fashion, to make a mad rush for the door when the jolt came. "But I 'll tell you one thing," he added presently, when the democratic exit was accomplished, and they stood at

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parting in the sharp air of the winter night: "The working-people has had a pretty long apprenticeship to sacrifice. They 've learned to stick together; they 've learned the love as is more than a name. Yes," — his rough, solemn face was uplifted to the planet Hilda had watched from the train, — "the fight 's a hard one. It 's bitter, — I 'm bitter. But wait till we win the day, and we 'll show the world what brotherhood means."

"What mixture of limitation and nobility," mused Hilda, making her way home with quickened pulse. "Take his attitude on the sympathetic strike. There will be a holier expression of brotherhood some day than any based, like that, on the class-fight theory. Yet his words thrilled me. His class antagonism is terrific, elemental, — but it is no more ingrained than Cousin Howard's. And of the two men, Mr. O'Hagan sees deeper, to my mind.

"He is wrong about the scab. He will have to learn he is wrong. Yet in his place, — in their place, — could I feel differently? Doubtless scabs suffer unjustly and cruelly. So did Tories in the Revolutionary War. Is n't Cousin Howard's pet principle, unchecked freedom for the individual, workman or employer, the Tory principle in the industrial war? What is law as it develops but a progressive limitation of personal rights?

"Yes; but such limitations ought to be imposed by

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the state, not by a voluntary organization, like trade-unions. There I am at socialism again! How my mind travels toward it, from whatever point of the circle I set out!

"As for Mr. O'Hagan," she returned, woman-wise, to the personal impression; "that man refreshes me. He is an idealist. The misery of the workers is a ceaseless anguish to him. You feel it pulsing through him, and you feel his unquenchable hope!" Her spirit made a discovery that set the blood a-tingle in her veins. "This labor leader is the first man I have ever known, except Lawrence Ferguson," she thought, slowly, passionately, "who has found an heroic, definite Cause, unrelated to his own interests, to live and die for."

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CHAPTER X

LEARNING AND MAMMON

HILDA realized one day with sudden alarm that she loathed her surroundings. Their ugliness pressed on her like a physical pain. To her first glad exultation in freedom had succeeded a sense of deadly oppression; to the eager impulse toward unlimited friendliness, a sense of baffled helplessness extremely bitter. The philanthropic attitude became more and more abhorrent, and an unspeakable distaste for "doing good" as a profession overswept her like nausea.

> "The good want power, but to weep barren tears,
> The powerful goodness want,"

she sighed. A wave of revolt was sucking her away. She feared lest she lose her moorings, and be borne back, she knew not whither.

It was not strange that instincts long suppressed began to stir in her, the artist instincts, clamoring for the joyous play of creative powers. Homesick for definite activities, she moved vaguely "in a mist," as the heroes of the old tragedians died; clutched in spirit at old safeguards, and yearned for positive if

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limited duties, in performing which her own effectiveness might be clear.

Upon these musings broke anew the call for active decision. Brenton boasted a great popular Institute, which offered both industrial and intellectual training, and claimed to be a People's University. Hither, at the beginning of the second term, had come Hilda's old friend and classmate, Henrietta Morse, unexpectedly summoned to serve as instructor in economics. The position of Director of the Department of Industrial Arts was now offered to Hilda. Here assuredly would be scope at once for her democratic instincts and for her specific training. Could she do better than accept?

But while she questioned, the situation developed in an unexpected manner.

It had happened the spring before that much talk had been excited by the forced resignation of a professor of economics at a distant university, munificently endowed by Mr. Kraut, the multi-millionaire. Suddenly, this autumn, the announcement was made that the Huntington Institute had received from the same gentleman the offer of $500,000, this sum being his income for a considerable portion of a week. Gratulations followed, and a special meeting of thanksgiving, with fervent prayers for the noble donor, and a doxology sung seemingly in his honor, was held in the largest hall of the city.

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Hilda was sick at heart. Among her new friends, and not there only, Mr. Kraut was a mythical figure, — a sort of giant shadow of commercial sin, stalking among men and darkening their pathway. From the heaps of his wealth voices of despair cried aloud. With one hand, he knocked his competitors into the mire, and ground the faces of the poor; with the other, he scattered his money abroad, in dramatic charity. Not only the late episode in the West, but several similar occurrences, had set in motion rumors, low but many, that in institutions under his august protection liberty of utterance was gagged.

"Noble action, that of Huntington Institute," remarked Mr. O'Hagan, meeting Hilda on the street. "Dignified position it 's in, — licking Kraut's boots. Splendid liberty of teaching you 'll have after this. No prejudice in favor of capital, no constraint on free speech, oh no! Only, if any teacher there should find out that the methods of the trust are a bit questionable, and it should occur to him to mention the fact, you 'll be surprised to find how soon the authorities will discover that that teacher ain't a competent man."

Nor was the labor leader alone in his views. There was a little lift of the shoulders at receptions when the news was discussed; the cheaper portion of the press admitted sarcastic comments; in one or two of the more independent organs of the better type, a note of inquiry found its way. The protest

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was faint and weak, overpowered by the surging music of congratulation, but it was surely there.

When any question of grave social moment was agitating the community, a meeting, gathered in some unexplained manner, was pretty sure to happen at Langley House. It happened now.

The meeting was a small one, no reporters present, notable rather for quality than for quantity; two or three professors and instructors from Huntington Institute, known to constitute the more radical element in the place; several trustees of that and other corporations; a number of clergymen, among whom Dr. Wilkinson was not present, having ignored his invitation; the president and dean of a great neighboring university; and a few business men, including Mr. Howard Brown, whom Hilda had captured against his will. Probably Miss Abbott was the only person in the city who could have drawn that little group together for a discussion of such an issue. Some of them had done a brave thing in coming, and were quite ready to abide the consequences of their action. But they looked more uncomfortable than heroic, as they sat awaiting the delayed appearance of their chairman.

Hilda sat by Henrietta Morse, and tried to cheer the sensitive, troubled face by a little joke. But Henrietta refused to be cheered. The girl was of a fine and thoroughly academic type of mind,— radical in theory, but conventional in action, not from

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moral, but from intellectual timidity. This thing touched her to the quick.

"What is the use of meeting?" she broke out *sotto voce*. "We shall simply talk; there is nothing we can do. No trustees in America would refuse the offer of money."

"Not if they were convinced the money was earned by sin?" cried Hilda.

Henrietta shook her head. "Oh yes," she sighed. "But I'd like to see the evidence that would convince them. People find what they look for; trustees will always decide that a criticised donor is a much-injured individual. Heavens! Our action may end in an endorsement of Mr. Kraut!"

The head of her department, a middle-aged gentleman with a pleasant, florid face, frowned slightly. He was a person who, like most of us, took himself for granted as a friend of freedom. Memory was keen in him of undergraduate days in which he had read Shelley and mildly defied certain mild conventions. He privately thought himself a radical, on the ground of his kindly desires for all men, but his radicalism had never encountered the strain of the actual. He had joined the present agitation half automatically, being unable to picture himself on the other side of a liberal movement; but he was extremely ill at ease.

"There might conceivably be worse things than an endorsement of Mr. Kraut," he observed. "It

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is a bad thing to exonerate a sinner, but it 's a worse thing to condemn an innocent man. How can we be sure of the facts? It 's a pretty grave matter to increase the cackle of unenlightened and possibly mistaken scandal. We all know that Kraut has only done as he would be done by" — ("or done," murmured some one) — "if his competitors had the chance. None of the charges against him are proved. I confess that I have an uneasy feeling that it is a little uncharitable to call a meeting like this."

Hilda's lips set in a scornful curve. "We are not accusing the man," she thought. "We are demanding that the accusations against him be considered." The voice of her neighbor on the other side struck refreshingly on her ear.

"I call that r-o-t," it murmured emphatically. The voice belonged to a valiant little clergyman of one of the smaller religious bodies.

"Really," said this clergyman, "I think that sensitiveness in regard to Mr. Kraut is a little misplaced. It reminds me of the old lady who dashed in at peril of her life when the circus was passing, to pick up a banana skin from the pavement, she was so afraid the poor elephant would slip on it. Mr. Kraut's massive onward tread will continue to trample civilization imperturbably down, whether colleges take his money or not. Where did I read a sentence like this? 'The general cowardice of our age covers itself with the illusion of charity, and

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asks in the name of Christ that no feelings be hurt.' The great danger against which we need to be on our guard to-day is not lest we be unjust to wealth, but lest we be respecters of persons."

The professor of economics shook his reproachful head. "Justice is a sacred and absolute word," he said. "I could countenance no action which would even imply censure of Mr. Kraut, unless positive facts to his disadvantage were distinctly proved. I know nothing but rumors."

"We know that the resignation of Professor Roberts was requested," said Henrietta Morse, a flash of courage in her gray eyes. Like Bunyan's Mr. Fearing, she trembled neither at lions nor giants nor hills of difficulty, but solely at the phantoms of her own mind.

"Are we entirely sure," returned her chief, with reproof in his tone, "that this action was due to his economic views? I understand that the competence of Mr. Roberts is gravely called in question."

Mr. O'Hagan's sardonic face rose before Hilda's mind; but at this moment Miss Abbott ushered into the room the proposed chairman of the meeting, a distinguished philanthropist, who entered with a troubled air beneath his customary affability.

He assumed the chair with a look of slight constraint. From long use he had come to regard that article of furniture as his natural perquisite; but

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for some reason it seemed a little less comfortably padded than usual.

"Ladies and gentlemen," — the emotional vibration of the orator quivered through his rich voice, — "we are together, I understand, to discuss, in assured privacy, a very delicate matter. Let me remind you at the outset that serious consequences might be entailed were any report of our deliberations to come to the public ear. I would request, as a precaution which will, I am sure, appeal to you, that no names be mentioned this afternoon, and that specific references be, so far as possible, avoided." After a slight pause Dr. Humphries continued with evident hesitation: —

"Moral scruples have, I am told, arisen, — I learned the fact, I confess, with surprise and regret, — concerning the very generous benefactions, past and proposed, from which certain institutions known to us all have largely benefited. It is impossible for any Christian man, — it is certainly impossible for *me*," — the inflection delicately indicated a climax, — "to ignore a moral scruple, however strained it may appear. I have therefore consented to the obviously painful duty of presiding over this meeting. The Christian honor of our churches and colleges is their most precious possession. Let us guard it sacredly from any breath of scandal. I trust our deliberations may be informal and frank, as they are private, and I

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wait with interest to know what justification any one present can offer for the extraordinary question which has, I understand, been raised, as to the righteousness of receiving certain generous gifts."

There was a brief silence; then Henrietta Morse spoke, in her pure accent, with slight, gentle hesitation, but no timidity. "It seems to us rather, Dr. Humphries," she said, "that it is for those who advocate the acceptance of this money to furnish us with the grounds of their action. We can hardly go anywhere — to a dinner in the town, to an afternoon call — without hearing the gift in question satirically commented on. The money is under suspicion. It is natural for us — especially those of us who are connected with Huntington Institute — to desire to be equipped with some defence for the action of the college."

"Plucky girl," murmured Philip Mervyn, who was sitting in a corner by Janet Frothingham, his face a trifle more quizzical than usual. But Dr. Humphries was replying uneasily.

"We live in a very unkind world, it would seem," he sighed, — "if what you say is true. There is no one in America of a more liberal spirit than Mr. — ah, than the gentleman in question. I understand that he is a most upright man in private life, an exemplary husband and father" — "So was Charles the First," muttered the outspoken clergyman — "I know that he has the simplest of habits. I have my-

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self seen him in winter wearing a pair of woollen gloves. He teaches a Sunday-school class himself. He is a deeply religious man."

"It is a touching picture," said the clergyman incisively; "but the man's private character has nothing to do with the question. The thing we are afraid of is that his money was made unrighteously. It certainly was if the quarter of what one hears is true. If so, there 's an old proverb that the receiver is as bad as the thief."

"May I ask" — drawled Philip Mervyn, in a voice that arrested attention at once, — cool, clear, penetrating, — "may I ask what means you would brand as unrighteous, in modern money-making?"

"I suppose," retorted the clergyman incautiously, "it would take less time to mention those that were righteous."

The young lawyer nodded slightly: "If you look into this matter, you 'll find it pretty difficult to make distinctions. I don't say the methods of a certain trust are pretty; but I have yet to discover pretty methods in business. Discrimination is impossible, and idealists" — he flashed a defiant glance at Janet Frothingham, who flashed instantly back — "would better stay among their ideals."

"I should like to add a word to that," — the speaker was the cultured Unitarian minister, Dr. Talbot. "Church and University are the strongholds of idealism in America; they are our best hope for the

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future. Their endowment is the most important end that can be pursued. What matter if, for the attainment of this end, a little criticism is incurred? What if, in one or two departments, dealing neither with philosophy, science, nor letters, a hampering influence is felt for a short time? Donors, — we are among friends, I may speak clearly, — donors die. Their gifts remain, to strengthen the cause of spirituality in unborn generations. It is a trivial scruple which would bid us pause."

"Now there," said Mervyn, "I cannot agree with the speaker. If any hampering conditions attach to a gift, an institution forfeits its moral leadership by accepting that gift. Here is the precise line, to my mind, that ought to be drawn; it may not behoove us to investigate the origin of money offered, but it does behoove us jealously to guard the conditions attached to it. If a college stands for anything, it stands for intellectual freedom. Cleavage between theory and practice is a blight in the academic world."

It was a pleasure to Hilda to note a nod of assent from almost every professional person present.

But Henrietta was not satisfied; and Hilda, knowing her friend's shrinking, dwelt affectionately on the sensitive, resolute face, as the young instructor spoke.

"Ah! But is n't the difficulty just here?" said she. "Such conditions are often implied rather than explicit. Who can deny that if the fund from which,

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let us say, the salaries of the faculty are drawn, is given by a certain person, a little constraint, a reluctance to scrutinize the acts of that person too closely, will creep into the mind? Courtesy itself, if no other cause, makes this inevitable, it seems to me. We are put in a false position."

"As a matter of fact," said the incisive clergyman, coming to her relief as she hesitated; "to accept a gift, as public sentiment now stands, is to endorse the giver. We should like to shirk this fact, perhaps, but we can't."

"Exactly," assented Henrietta. "And so I think, in every such case, we are driven back on the first question: is the giver a man we ought to endorse?"

She paused, but Mervyn kept silence, while Janet watched him with covert eagerness, doomed to disappointment. Splendid in rectitude whenever a moral issue was clearly defined, the mind of the young lawyer always refused to entangle itself in subtleties, or to run a moral risk. Janet, ever straining upward to the region where the topmost peaks of idealism lost themselves in the heavens, found it impossible to appreciate the full worth of a nature contented to move perpetually upon the sober though high table-lands of accredited moralities, below the stratum of the clouds.

"I do not agree with Mr. Mervyn," Henrietta presently resumed, "that discrimination is impossible. It needs, for instance, no fine legal power in

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drawing distinctions to find the methods of the trust which is in all our minds offensive. Competition is warfare, but there is honor in war. That trust has violated the rules of the game."

Mr. Howard Brown's friendly face had for some time been growing more and more distressed. As he rose now, heavily, and prepared to speak, people leaned forward in their chairs. The presence of a business man of such wealth and integrity as his was felt to add weight to the meeting, and his words would be decisive to many present. He spoke with off-hand, informal emphasis: —

"Ladies and gentlemen, may I be allowed to say, without giving offence, that this present body seems hardly competent to discuss the status of the trust in question? I am glad to give you my personal testimony about it. I am no friend to trusts, as many of you know, but so far as the charges against this special trust are concerned, why, I am obliged to say that it is simply the best managed affair in the country. Call it immoral! It 's only successful! It has done more than anything organized in America for our commerce. It employs tens of thousands of workmen. Its commodities go from Siberia to Africa."

"All this has nothing to do with the morality of its methods," interposed the irreconcilable clergyman.

"Methods! I tell you that trust is a benefac-

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tion to our country; it is one of the surest proofs of our national prosperity. Who rails against it? The competitors it has beaten, because it was cleverer than they. It 's hard lines to be beaten, I admit. But every competitor of Kraut's would have done the same thing if he had had the chance. Is n't that true, Mr. Mervyn?"

"Why, yes." Philip Mervyn spoke with a shade of hesitation. "I presume that 's true. Of course, at the beginning of their history there were a good many shady things; any number of charges have been brought into the courts. But most of them have been dismissed as non-proven. It is very hard to prove anything against them. They cover up their tracks."

"Do you think they covered them very effectively in regard to the freight rates they secured in '79?" asked Miss Morse.

"Well," admitted Mr. Mervyn, "that was rather an ugly affair."

"What is the use of talking like that?" queried Mr. Brown. "Every corporation in the country would have done the same. They do it all the time, only their operations are not found out because they are smaller. The trust was unlucky."

"Do you mean" — a gentle voice from the back of the room asked the question deferentially — "that they habitually violate the law, and that you approve of their doing so?"

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A slight flush mounted to Howard Brown's honest brow. "I don't mean that I'd do it myself," he said. "But after all, that is an absurd law. It infringes personal liberty; it's bad; it's sure to be broken. A man has a right to make any private bargain with the railways that he likes, as he has a right to employ any labor that he likes. These modern laws, as you call them, are ruining the nation. You people who don't understand business are not easy to talk to," he added half apologetically.

Dr. Humphries, the chairman, had been nodding vigorous approval during Mr. Brown's remarks; the academic mind, being a little dazed, found for the moment nothing to say.

Philip Mervyn rose to his feet, but at the same moment Dr. Humphries's rich voice began, and the lawyer remained, half standing.

"I do not see," the doctor was saying, "that any evidence against the character of our generous friend or his business methods is forthcoming, and —"

How evidence could be offered if facts, according to the chairman's dictum, were to remain unmentioned, Hilda failed to perceive. So did Henrietta Morse, who spoke up with alarming directness.

"May I ask if our chairman has read the Congressional Reports from the years '69 to '80?" she questioned.

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"I am far too busy a man to study reports," the doctor returned with importance; then catching sight of the young lawyer: "Mr. Mervyn has the floor."

"There are just two evident facts at the bottom of our talk," said the young man, speaking slowly and quietly. "It is commonly suspected that the Kraut money was made by illegitimate means; it is also commonly suspected that academic freedom is hampered in the institutions which that money helps support. These suspicions are the facts in view of which this meeting has been summoned.

"Now we are ourselves, as Mr. Howard Brown most justly pointed out, a body incompetent to pass judgment on the justice of either charge. Two lines of possible action seem to me to lie before us.

"We might appoint committees to investigate the truth of these charges.

"We might decide that an honorable institution should refuse the money, on the mere ground of the bad repute in which it is held, and draw up some kind of memorial to that effect.

"If I am to express my personal view, I will say that to urge that the money be refused, on the ground of the suspicions attaching to it, seems to me a hopelessly Utopian proceeding. On the other hand, it is useless to appoint committees, for we are not a body of sufficient weight to secure the services of experts; and for the matter of that I don't

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believe that experts would find out the truth. We appear to me to be caught in a *cul de sac*. Mr. Chairman, I move that we adjourn."

During the first part of this business-like speech a look of admiration and pleasure had crept over Janet's face; before it ended the lines of baffled distress, growing almost habitual to her forehead, appeared again. A sense of helplessness descended upon the audience. Was this to be the end, Hilda wondered? The logic was good.

But it was Dr. Humphries who prolonged a situation which nevertheless he did not enjoy. The impulse to conceal a feeble attitude by graceful drapery is irresistible.

"We are hardly impaled on the horns of the dilemma which our friend presents to us, I believe," said the doctor cheerily. "I for one am deeply impressed by the admirable reply given by Mr. Brown to the scandals against a Christian gentleman, and I have found what he said most satisfactory."

The professor of economics now spoke for the first time. "I am glad to say," were his words, "that I fully agree to this. We have now considered this matter, and I am happy to be assured of what I was inclined to think from my private investigation, that popular rumor here, as so often, is unfounded. We shall doubtless be misunderstood in accepting this generous gift; but no Christian

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institution should shrink from misunderstanding. I trust that Miss Morse may see this matter as I do, and that the department of economics in Huntington Institute may take a firm and solid position, which will be reassuring to the trustees and the public."

Miss Morse shook her head lightly, decidedly; when the same gentle voice which had made itself heard once before, spoke up from the background.

"Opinion on this definite case may be closed to us," said the voice. "But, just as a matter of curiosity, I should like to ask our chairman one question: Does he, or does he not, hold that the public at large has any responsibility toward the ethical sources of wealth?"

For once, the eloquence of Dr. Humphries was not forthcoming. While he paused and stirred uncomfortably, Philip Mervyn spoke up: —

"If I may answer that question, I say, no. I still think that our duty is confined to the scrutiny of conditions, not of origin."

"Would you accept money offered a church from a gambling-hell or a brothel?"

"No!" stammered Mervyn, with an accent of disgust. "No; one could n't do that."

"Where would you draw the line?" pursued the voice.

There was again a pause. But it was not in

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nature for the flow of Dr. Humphries's eloquence long to remain stanched, and his velvet tones were soon heard again. He was thinking as he spoke, — a rare occurrence, perhaps, — and he used his words as a spider his thread, spinning them out as he felt his way by their help through the void, toward a distant conviction.

"The sense of ethical responsibility is the glorious triumph of civilization," mused the doctor. What so fortifying as an initial platitude? "Through its progressive victory — "

The attention of Hilda drooped; when she recovered it, five minutes later, the doctor was triumphantly concluding: —

"We blind human beings are expressly exonerated from harsh judgments on others. I should refuse no money, for fear of inflicting injustice, unless the donor were definitely convicted by responsible persons — by the courts of law, indeed — of criminal practices."

"In that case," said the voice, more gently than ever, "you will, of course, never be called on to refuse any money, since those condemned by law are usually in jail, and it is not likely that a sentenced prisoner will be stirred to enthusiasm for education."

Again things seemed at a dead-lock, and there was a stir suggestive of departure, when the door opened. A man of fine presence and set face entered.

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The audience recognized Mr. Walter Henderson, prominent citizen, treasurer of nearly every philanthropy in Brenton, and manager of a great railroad into the bargain.

"Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Henderson, in tones of studied formality, "as I had a word to say, I venture to present myself among you, having learned of your meeting accidentally. I presume that talk is turning on the question — entirely irrelevant, by the way, to this gathering — of the relation of Huntington Institute to the Kraut money. Now what I wish to say is this: to claim that society ought to investigate the sources of wealth is criminal nonsense. We are responsible for the way in which we use money, not for where it comes from; that is none of our business. It is irreligious to say that it is our business. The Lord makes the wrath of man to praise Him. Does n't He cause flowers to grow where blood has watered the earth in battle? It is our duty to let any one, no matter who, do the Lord's work in this world. One more word: to administer the affairs of Huntington Institute is the business of the trustees of that institute, not of the general public. I believe you will all live to be ashamed of this meeting. I wish you good-night."

He was gone, leaving an embarrassed audience, some angry, some humiliated, some amused. Hilda was in the last case. Happening to know that several high-minded men had refused to serve on a

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certain committee with Mr. Henderson on account of his record in railway transactions, she was not surprised at his speech.

Dr. Humphries arose, with the evident intention of bringing the meeting to a close. "I earnestly trust," said he with mellow dignity, "that all present will be satisfied as is my friend at Huntington Institute, to rest on the wise judgment of those who are so well qualified to speak. It would be a sad thing were the community forced to hesitate in the acceptance of these generous gifts, — gifts of which we may in confidence say that we hope the end has not yet been seen. I need not remind you of the noble use to which the institution so well represented here will put that money. May it continue to be, as it has been in the past, the nursery of piety, learning, and useful arts; may it glorify God while it serves humanity."

The president of the neighboring university had sat speechless, a dignified wooden statue, throughout the evening. At this juncture, a sardonic smile was observed to flit across his countenance. As for Hilda, she recalled a German picture, in which the cross whereon hangs the Crucified is supported by a peering demon.

Every one was eager to go. A meeting had been held, in itself an impressive fact to the Brenton mind, and surely, this tribute having been paid to conscience, decorum might now be allowed to resume

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its pleasant sway. But Henrietta Morse was on her feet, daunted neither by the restiveness of the audience nor by the frown of Dr. Humphries. In clear, gentle tones, she bore her witness to the truth she saw: —

"Mr. Chairman, in our interesting discussion we have been principally employed in fencing with one another. Before we separate, may we not look at the matter from another point of view? It is obvious that, in the most favorable construction, a college runs a certain moral risk in accepting money of which the source lies under suspicion. What obliges it to take such risk? The times are critical. Our colleges ought, as has been so well said, to be citadels of the ideal; they are coming to be regarded by the popular mind as dependencies of privilege. The working classes distrust or ignore them, the public at large views their alliance with wealth of dubious origin with increasing cynicism. Under these circumstances, absolute proof that the sources of a gift are tainted would to my mind be required only if the refusal of money is in itself an immoral act. That it is so is a position assumed curiously often in America, but one which we should all shrink from when explicitly stated. Otherwise, I consider that popular suspicion of a certain degree of gravity should in itself constitute sufficient ground for the refusal of money. And why? Because the colleges owe it to the democracy to abstain from all appear-

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ance of evil. The best impulses of this democracy are aroused against the methods by which certain men are supposed to have gained their wealth. The college that accepts the gifts of men who are thus at the bar of public opinion takes a fearful responsibility; for it suppresses these impulses. So far as that college is honored, it silences the voice of conscience in the nation; so far as that voice speaks on in spite of it the college is discredited as an unbiased witness to truth. I question whether any amount of free speech in the classroom can counteract the effect of this practical alliance with the plutocratic element. Think, I beg you, not as you have been doing, whether you can justify the acceptance of such money to your consciences, but whether your consciences force you to accept it. Ask yourselves whether the colleges will hold a nobler place in our national life and bear more unmistakable witness to purity and freedom with it, or without it. On the one hand is the offer of material expansion, of new buildings, higher salaries, finer plant. On the other hand is an opportunity to win back alienated confidence, and to show by open act of self-denial that a college, like a man, does not live by bread alone."

Henrietta's speech probably did her cause more harm than good. In any case the conclusion was foregone. The trustees of Huntington Institute

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accepted the gift of Mr. Kraut as a matter of course. Hilda's refusal of the proffered position was accepted without comment. Miss Morse became from that time a shade more outspoken in her radicalism in the class-room, while her chief showed a trifle more caution in guarding against possible injustice to the cause of capital.

Hilda sat in Miss Abbott's room talking it over: —

"See what I found Mildred Ellis scribbling during the meeting," she said, and Miss Abbott read the lines: —

"TRUTH AT THE BAR.

"Weary and hopeless, 'What is Truth?' he sneered, —
Pilate, the Roman lord, —
While Truth Incarnate at his bar appeared,
Silent, disowned, abhorred.

"Voice of the world! Again and yet again
It lures us to our loss,
While still before the judgment seat of men
God's Truth awaits the Cross."

Miss Abbott smiled, well pleased.

"Few people who meet Mildred casually realize the social passion within that evidently disciplined nature," was her comment.

"She is very radical, really," said Hilda. "Though not in Janet's way; she said to me after the meeting: 'I am in terror lest the colleges repeat the choice of the Church at the time of the French

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Revolution, and shut themselves off from the democracy. That was an all but fatal mistake; the Church has not rallied from it yet.' Miss Abbott," the girl broke forth after a moment's pause, "I am very unhappy. I trusted the college world. I thought it the home of unstained and disinterested honor. To-day it seems to me riddled with moral evasions."

Miss Abbott only smiled. "Remember what I've told you," she said. "Don't generalize in a hurry."

"I did n't," returned Hilda. "What I wanted to say — and I bit the words back — was that the college world seemed to me ready to become the slave of greed in the name of learning. Don't you think I have kept to my rôle of Listener pretty well through all this affair?"

This time Miss Abbott laughed. "I congratulate you on your self-control, and advise you to keep to your rôle a while longer," she said; and then, suddenly grave: "What can we expect? So soon as the idea gets embodied in an institution, its freedom is gone. It has given hostages to fortune. All institutions accredited by the world — churches, colleges, charities — are embodied deep in the existing order. You can't expect them to turn against it. They are conservative by the very terms of their existence."

"What have the great universities been in history?" cried Hilda, protesting. "The homes of the

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Ideal, the nurseries of the future! The young pilgrims of truth have there been started on their way. Why, I never entered a university without thinking of my own college, and thrilling to those words of Dante: 'We too are pilgrims, even as ye are.'"

Miss Abbott sighed a little. "Time was," she said, "when the pilgrim of truth travelled with no impedimenta to speak of except a pack of abstract notions. To-day, he has to carry libraries laboratories, and museums along with him. Doubtless he has done well, but we can't expect him to move lightly, with the old freedom."

"What do you think the radical ought to do?" questioned Hilda. "Henrietta is terribly perplexed as to whether she ought to resign."

"Let her stay," said Miss Abbott decidedly. "Speak her mind as vigorously and publicly as she can, and stay, — as long as she is wanted. To abandon the college is to abandon the rising generation."

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CHAPTER XI

THE WAY OF DISILLUSION

THE winter was over, and the warm weather set in early. Lincoln Street was in a whirlpool of noise: oaths and quarrels, such as bubble furiously in a tenement-house district when the social cauldron is heated, ceaseless traffic, and agitated speech. Bitter talk, generated by the continued industrial distress, exploded everywhere, — in saloons, at street corners, in the small park near by of a Sunday afternoon, in the rooms of Langley House.

> "The place is full of noises,
> Sounds and sad airs that give distress and torture,"

Janet parodied. Mr. Simpson's pallid face was increasingly in evidence; Janet's caustic speech reflected him more and more; Mildred Ellis grew wan day by day, though her sweet cheerfulness never faltered.

Baffled, defeated, Hilda sat brooding. She was retracing in spirit the Way of Disillusion; it is a desolate path.

The insatiable hunger for beauty that had controlled her youth had been driven into far recesses of her nature by the ache of a great compassion.

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But the love of beauty is of the brood of the immortals, and in the soul in which it has once sojourned it can never die. The nerves of pity were for the time outwearied; the artist within her wakened imperious, and lover of men and lover of loveliness faced each other with frank antagonism in her mind. The words of her old Florentine master rang in her ears: "Power you have, and in our guild you belong, and if you leave us you 'll rue it."

Yet neither artist nor lover of men knew precisely how to find self-expression.

"I do not know where to put my life," sighed Hilda.

The mood of pure protest, such as Janet Frothingham seemed slipping into, was alien to her essentially positive and creative nature. She was of those who act. Her mind groped toward some constructive effort. But whither to turn? Without despising philanthropy as did her friend, she had come to feel in it a palliative which, even when most enlightened, could never develop into cure. From the academic world she shrank with an instinctive repugnance, doubtless unjustified, since the affair of the Kraut money. An American woman has few opportunities to agitate effectively for political reform, and moreover a little of Janet's distrust had influenced Hilda: the labor movement commanded her definite allegiance despite its limitations of

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vision and its incidental sins; but what save barren sympathy could a delicately nurtured young artist give to this great cause? And deeper than any practical or personal perplexity lay a profound discouragement. A cold distrust of democracy, in its ideals no less than in its achievement, crept over her spirit. Was the inheritance from her mother to conquer? Should she join the reaction after all?

A flitting dream had at times visited her of salvation to be wrought through the Church. This she now tried in vain to recall. Her interview with Dr. Wilkinson had been one episode only in the long process by which it had faded. The girl's intellectual scruples, like those of thousands, might have been dispersed by the sight of an unworldly Christianity which threw in its lot with the dispossessed. Such a sight, on any general scale, the churches did not offer her, — perhaps because her eyes were holden. The other day she had tossed to Mildred Ellis a sonnet found among old papers, written during her weeks of exaltation in the Lower Church at Assisi: —

OUR LADY POVERTY

O stern, O spirit-fair, O wraith-like bride!
As pass the centuries, thy phantom face
Wavers amid the shadows' deep embrace,
Or softly gleams and beckons, dim descried
By the glow of tapers on the altar wide
Beneath thee; in thy features pale we trace
That which allures, yet warns, and the whole place
Is sacred, with thy presence glorified.

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Christ weds thee to St. Francis; he draws near,
Solemn, elate, to proffer thee his vow,
A bridegroom dedicate; in sorrow thou
Dost gaze beyond, with searching eyes austere
That watch not him but us. Ah, vain thy fear!
Thy spell is told, no lover seeks thee now.

Mildred's face had glowed as she read with an expression, not wholly sad, which Hilda could not penetrate; she had seemed on the point of speaking, then had lapsed into silence.

Hilda's growing radicalism, her intolerant distaste for playing any part whatsoever in existing social machinery, was embittered by news from England. Half unconsciously, a silent mystic sense of spiritual comradeship with Lawrence Ferguson had strengthened her days. Now a feeling of desertion struck cold upon her hidden life. In common with many of the ardent young socialists of his group, Ferguson seemed coming to terms with the world. He had even accepted political office in a distant colony and was leaving England. "Lawrence has been reasonable, for once," wrote Dorothy. A horrid memory of Browning's Chiappino in "A Soul's Tragedy" wormed its way into Hilda's mind as she recognized in his reported speeches what seemed to her a tone of compromise. Was Lawrence to be a five-and-twentieth leader of revolt? Well! She should know in time, for the Fergusons were to visit America en route for their new home. So wrote Dorothy, — Dorothy, whose

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infrequent letters, always a little wistful, at times a little fretful, gave Hilda a shivering fear lest in these personal relations also she had furthered moral failure and spiritual wreck.

"I do not know where to put my life," sighed Hilda.

Her Christian sentiment, strong and deep as it was, deserted her utterly at times, having no basis in Christian conviction. A mood of thorough-going paganism would then possess her, — an intense craving for personal wholeness, an aversion to the sorrowing and weak. But the paganism of the modern can rarely enjoy unconscious Hellenic healthfulness; it is perforce either a pose or an agony.

She put out her hand for a book at her bedside, and read with relish these passages from Nietsche, — an author reserved for such moments.

"One rightly sees the salvation and the future of humanity in the absolute domination of aristocratic values. . . . What greater and more fatal error than that of the happy, the robust, the powerful of soul and body, who begin to doubt their right to happiness? Away with this topsy-turvy world, — away with this shameful weakness of sentiment! Let the sick not render the well sick, — that should be on earth the highest view-point, and to reach it the highest requisite is that the well should be separated from the sick, protected from the very sight

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of them. The right to existence of the well is of the highest importance, for they alone are the guarantee of the future, they alone are responsible for humanity. But for them to be able to do what they alone can, can we leave them the liberty to act as doctors, consolers, saviors of the sick? No, let pure air flow in, — seek good company, — or create solitude, if it must be. Thus, my friends, we may defend ourselves, at least for a little longer, against the two most terrible contagions that menace us, — against profound disgust for man, against profound pity for man. . . .

"My question concerned the value of the instincts of pity, renunciation, sacrifice. Against these instincts arose in me a distrust from day to day more profound. In them I saw precisely the great snare of humanity, the supreme temptation and seduction which would lead it, — whither then? — to annihilation? I saw there the beginning of the end, the pause in the march, lassitude which looks back, will turning against life, the last illness announcing itself by symptoms of tenderness and melancholy. I understood that this ethics of compassion which was spreading more and more, which was reaching even philosophers and making them ill, was the most disquieting symptom of our disquieting civilization, — a return toward a new Buddhism. Among philosophers, this principle, this exaggerated and wholly modern estimate of pity, is indeed new.

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Until now it was precisely on the negative value of pity that philosophers had agreed. Let it suffice me to name Plato, Spinoza, La Rochefoucauld, and Kant, — four spirits as different as possible from one another, but agreed on one point, — the contempt of pity."

"If pity were really cruelty in disguise?" mused Hilda, laying down the stinging book.

She fell asleep, her mind filled with bitter thoughts, and dreamed a bitter dream.

She was in a place of shadows. Around her swept circular darkness, broken here and there where the gloom was thinnest by black bounding walls of jagged rock. She thought herself alone, when a low laugh, known to her instantly as the laugh of a devil, broke on the thickened air; and as slowly her sight unsealed, she divined devils all around her, prisoned for the most part in the fastnesses of the rocks. Close to her, in particular, behind a grating in the cliff, a mighty demon loomed. His eyes glared red, his lips curled back, his hot breath scorched her cheek; a sense of flames was in the air, although no flames were seen.

She turned and fled downward, — for the place was like a descending amphitheatre below her. In the shadows at the foot of this amphitheatre, or pit, there seemed a level space, and on this space, very small and far, the darkness surging around it, or as almost seemed, from it, arose a cross.

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Painfully stumbling, she made her way down, to the sound of demon laughter, and sank at the wounded feet of the crucified. "Is Christ in hell?" she thought, and sought to kiss the feet, to bathe them with fast-flowing tears, to dry them with her hair. A hush had fallen around; the shadows watched and hearkened.

And as she knelt, clinging, sobbing, secure, though tremulous, the figure on the cross released an arm, bent over her, and dealt her a blow that seemed to pierce between her soul and her body. Stung, dazed, aghast, she gazed upward; the thorn-crowned face of a devil leered with fierce malignity into her eyes. Far above, faint and hideous, she heard the laugh of the great demon of the rocks. It was caught, reëchoed, from a thousand throats. Hell lived with mirth; and agony tingling through every nerve, Hilda awoke to the horror of the night.

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After dismayed hours, she slept again, and dreamed at dawn. Only a face, this time, — two faces. She had seen them, but where she could not tell. They bent over her, illumined, glorified with a great compassion. She waked, broken and very sad, but in a gentle mood. Deep stillness fell upon her; the tears all day long kept rising to her eyes unbidden.

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CHAPTER XII

THE CONSOLERS

THE thrill of the new year penetrated even to Lincoln Street. Warm weather set free, indeed, innumerable smells, redolent of ancient filth, inanimate and human, and of recent cookery: but through them all stole the pathetic breath of the awakening earth. A good salt fragrance came at times from the masses of heaving sea-water not far away; one queried whether or no a hint of violets had brushed one's cheek, amid the prevalent odors of cabbage.

It seemed to Hilda that she had been for years in this district. She had been used all her life to claim as a natural right the refreshment of occasional change. While she trod impatiently the grimy pavements, a flutter as of wings stirred in her feet. Visions of the Italian Alps, whither Howard Brown had taken his daughters to spend the summer with Mrs. Lathrop, danced through her mind as she gazed into the throbbing blue, which not even city smoke could obscure. But the working population trudged stolidly to its labor in the morning, and trudged home from its labor at night, not appearing to notice the sky.

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Hilda appreciated, however, for the first time, since her life had pressed near to that of the workers, the advantage of national holidays. These she had been accustomed, with her own class, to regard as tiresome occasions, when one stayed at home for fear of encountering unpleasant crowds, or, if one could, fled the city in advance. She recognized now how precious were these rare breathing spaces, in which the blessed sunshine hours, coming, going, of one whole fair day were given to those who for the most part emerged into freedom only as darkness fell.

On such a day, in mid-June, she found herself spinning out of town on the trolley cars with three friends of hers, — young working-women, to whom she had given herself with that eager abandonment in friendship which had made her dear to her college comrades. As Hilda's life in Lincoln Street proceeded, she had learned that true friendship was as rare a gift of the gods there as elsewhere, though no rarer: but when it came, it had a peculiar charm. The dearest to her among these women, Katie Donovan, the slender Irish girl, had attached herself to Hilda with swift young passion, and Hilda found unfailing joy in sharing with her unspoiled imagination the delights of her own life, in poetry and art. Katie was, paradoxically, known as the smartest girl in the laundry where she worked. Maggie Murphy, another Celt, was an older woman. Heavy-faced, patient, deeply religious, she supported

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a helpless drunken old father on her meagre wage of seven dollars a week as a garment worker. Complaint was unknown to her, though a wasting disease had her in its grip, but the shadows in the thick cheeks grew weekly more pronounced. The third girl, Sonia Lifschitz, was slightly known to the others. A fiery young Russian of Hebrew origin, small, sallow, she had but recently reached American shores, and her clogged speech could not yet make clear her thought, — but Hilda had gathered dim hints of familiarity with socialist propaganda in Russia and elsewhere, of intellectual ambition and social idealism, that made her covet a closer acquaintance. Sonia had found employment, queerly incongruous with the fervent passion that consumed her, in a candy factory.

Hilda had spent serious hours discussing with the three in what direction ten cents spent on trolley car fares would bring them most quickly to the earthly paradise of green grass and country air. Catching the earnestness of her companions, she was quite as intent on the question as ever she had been in deciding between a spring in Sicily and the Pyrenees. They had succeeded in finding the direct route to Eden, if one might judge from the bright faces on the front seat of the trolley, this hot June morning, as the car swayed and shrieked and bumped along, tight-packed, in democratic fashion, with its throng of good-humored pleasure-seekers.

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"What 's this big street, Miss Lathrop? My, see them handsome houses!" exclaimed Maggie, as the car rushed past the broad, upper end of Webster Avenue, the chief thoroughfare of this part of the city.

"Why, Maggie, don't you know Webster Avenue?" asked Hilda.

Maggie drew a long breath: "Well, I never thought to see it!" she answered. "I 've heard tell of it. A friend of mine, she used to help in the spring-cleaning in a house here."

"I thought you were a Brenton girl," said Hilda.

"So I am, sure," said Maggie contentedly. "I was born and growed up here. But, bless you, why should I ever come this way?"

Hilda breathed deep. She realized that "the avenue" had acquired a new significance even to herself. Since she had moved familiarly in her new region it was no longer this handsome, shaded street, but a broad, squalid thoroughfare thronged with babies, lined with cheap shops below cheap tenements. She said little more, and presently the long bridge was crossed over the river, and the green arching streets of the suburbs received them.

It was not what one could call a secluded Paradise; it was a little faded, betrampled, and tired, Hilda thought, when they had arrived at their destination. The boulevard by which they had come was out of sight, indeed, hidden beneath a little

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hill, but the whirr-rr and bump of the cars, against which Hilda cherished a peculiar animosity, was ceaselessly audible. Many other groups of pleasure-seekers were about, leaving their trail of banana-skins and eggshells. The grass — albeit there was plenty of it, lush and tall — seemed breathed on by the coarse breath of the city. Still, there was abundance of flowers, to the girls' delight, — a rank growth of daisies, slightly dusty and fatigued, and buttercups galore. The little pond — Hilda tried to forget that the city water was drawn from it — reflected the exquisite sky as well as if it had not been held in symmetrical scallops by an embankment.

The girls sat under the delicate foliage of a young oak-tree that had hardly lost the ecstatic pink flush and fluff of its babyhood, looked toward the distant city, glowing rose-red under its gray smoke-haze, and drew long breaths.

"Don't it smell good?" said Maggie. "Just 's if some one had put cologne on the ground."

"Listen to the wind in the tree," murmured Katie, gazing into the plumage of the oak, with mystic eyes. "It 's like that you read us from Dant, Miss Lathrop, — that little wood he got into after he reached the top of that mountain. I 've been meanin' to tell you" — here the eyes sought Hilda's face with a glance of shy adoration; "I dreamed one night I was in that wood, and you and

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Dant come hand in hand to meet me. You were that lady you told us about, — what was her name? I thought it was real nice I dreamed that way of you an' your favorite poet together."

"Ain't it good an' cool?" broke in the more practical Maggie. "My, how hot I was yesterday!"

"It was n't so very hot a day," said Hilda, wondering.

"No; but it 's always hot summers up where I work. The room 's right under the roof. An' we was workin' on thick winter overcoats. They 're awful heavy an' hard to handle when it comes August. They all have to be made in summer, you know; winters we works on muslins."

The girl's slow speech broke into a little hacking cough.

"It 's hot in the laundry, too," said Katie absently; "so steamy! Did you know I could do more a day than any of the other girls, Miss Lathrop? I can iron two thousand linen collars a day. When it gets awful stuffy and steamy, I say those verses you taught me, about that girl named Lucy: —

> "'A violet by a mossy stone,
> Half hidden from the eye,
> Fair as a star, when only one
> Is shining in the sky.'

I love them words." A little smile of pure delight was on Katie's lips. "They make me feel lots

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cooler. The other girls laugh at me because I keep saying them all the time, and I 've got 'em to a little tune. But some of the girls is learning them, and they all say they make the time pass good."

"I wonder if it was n't worth while coming to live in Lincoln Street, just to introduce Wordsworth into a steam laundry in summer," mused Hilda, entertained and touched.

"Oh, Miss Lathrop, tell us a story. Tell us about some of the very nicest places you can think of," said Maggie, curling up on the grass contentedly.

"Very well," said Hilda. "Let 's make it a game. Each of us is to tell in turn the prettiest place she knows. I 'll begin. Mine is a green meadow, held like a cup high on the side of a great mountain. It 's still there, so still, you can't think! The slopes above sweep up into snowy peaks, that shine like — like — like that tin roof we saw as we came out on the trolley. The grass is n't like this, it is close and sweet and thick, snow patches lie on it, and a tiny flower pierces the snow with a shivering, fringed amethyst bell, — its name is Soldanella. But in the green grass are masses of lovely blue, like the sky over there where it meets the earth, — they 're forget-me-nots; and others of deeper blue, like the sky straight overhead, — they 're gentians; and others of rose-pink. And the air, — oh, if you girls could breathe it! When I 've been awake before dawn lately, while it still was cool, I 've tried to believe

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that I breathed the spice and fragrance of that Alpine air. But I did n't. Perhaps I shall never breathe it again. Yes, I shall, though."

Hilda's voice trailed off into silence, and began in a low semi-chant, singing more to herself than to her friends, the words in which her feelings during those dawn hours had been woven : —

"When I have passed mine hour of Fear,
And death a cloud behind me lies,
The heavenly songs I would not hear,
Nor gaze at once on Paradise :
Lord ! Grant that silence blest
My spirit may enfold,
And darkness : let me rest
Still, during time untold.
Nor dreams molest that sleep,
Nor memory the deep
Sweet shadows stab with pain,
But holy quiet reign.

"Then when refreshed I wake at last,
The work of dark and silence done,
My peaceful soul, no more aghast,
Ready to quit oblivion,
Before mine eyes unclose
On heaven's celestial rose,
Or sound mine ears shall greet
Of Thine approaching feet,
May airs around me minister,
Whispering a mystery of hope,
Such as of old were wont to stir
On some uplifted Alpine slope :
Winds afar from distant snow,
Over flowering fields that blow,
Purer than earth's purity,
Shall caress me silently ;

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This air of Paradise,
Making me very wise,
Sealing my tired eyes,
Shall through my senses steal,
Potent all woes to heal, —
Absolving from the pangs of earth, —
Assuring me of heavenly birth."

The musical undertones had died away almost into a whisper. Hilda had forgotten the girls, who listened spell-bound, — for hers was a voice which could transport its hearers to very far away. After a little pause, Katie, whose head was resting on her knee, looked up and touched her cheek.

"I 'll have to come and look at you, dear, as you lie there in the fields of Paradise," she said wistfully. "I 'll come softly ; I won't say a word ; I 'll just lean over and look. But I could n't never stay away."

Hilda stroked the girl's hair, remorsefully, tenderly.

"I shall like it all the better if you are there, Katie," she said. "You shall steal your hand into mine, and we 'll rest together : so still ! Girls, we 're forgetting the game. What is the most beautiful place you ever were in, Maggie ? "

Maggie's patient face turned slowly, with a look of ineffable content, to the glare of the little pond.

"Oh, this," she answered, with a happy sigh ; "seems like God was so near here, just like it does in church."

"I haf seen beautiful things enough." The

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Russian girl spoke for the first time, in careful, thick, broken English. Her intonation was scornful. "But I do not care for them. I care for f-r-reedom. In my own country I haf seen great steppes, wid the sky so near, and so far, and the white trees they shine, and mountains, high mountains, I haf seen, and the wide oce-an. But I am seek, so seek, when we come over, I do nearly die. And one day I am better, I c-r-rawl on deck, and the deck it is dirty, but there are leetle rainbows in the waves that dance, and ober there I see the shore, and p-r-resently we are in the harbor, and there stands a g-r-reat statue, a golden woman, very big, and they tell me she is Leeberty. Ah, and we say, We come to her country, she receive us, our t-r-ou-bles are over. That is the most beautifullest thing I efer see, — the leetle rainbows in the waves, and then the Golden Lady."

"I 'm afraid she has proved only a stepmother to you, Sonia," sighed Hilda, remembering the quarters in which Mr. Lifschitz, Sonia's father, had packed away his offspring. "I wonder, would n't you like to go back to your own land? No, I don't mean Russia," she added hastily, as a look of horror swept over the swarthy features. "I mean the true native land of you Hebrews, — Palestine."

Sonia shook her head decidedly. "No, no," she said. "The man at that meeting use fine words, but it is no true, no good. The true Zion of the Hebrew, it is America."

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"My beautiful places," it was Katie, speaking dreamily, "are all in me mind. My mother, she talks to me of Ireland, of the green hills of St. Columbkill she talks, and of the rings of the Good People. I 've never seen them, but I see them in me mind, and many other things. When I walk down Durham Street every morning to the laundry, I pretend the train-yards are hedge-rows, with the may on them, like she tells, and the sounds of the carts is brooks a-running, and the cars is wind in the trees, and I have a real pleasant walk."

Hilda kissed the girl's forehead lightly.

"That 's the best way to see beauty, after all, Katie. You know, girls," her face brightened, "we can't all visit the wonderful places on this round world we call the earth, but there 's another round world that every one of us has to ourselves. Do you know what it is?" She tapped her forehead, laughing.

"You don't mean — our heads?" said Katie, docile but puzzled.

"Yes, I do. Our heads are worlds. And we can fill them with just what scenery we please." An innocent, didactic mood took possession of Hilda, — if didacticism can ever be innocent. "We can put high mountains and green fields and shining rivers into them if we choose, or cheap theatres and ugly streets. All the noble people we meet in books will walk straight out of the books and live in our minds,

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if we ask them to. And beautiful thoughts will float like angels in our mind-sky. And do you know," she spoke mysteriously, "every one of these mind-worlds is far bigger than the earth we walk on. We can add new continents to it all the time, and still there will be room. 'All things exist,' a great poet said, 'in the human imagination.' Girls, the only important thing is to have that inner world full of beauty. I've met people in the most wonderful parts of the earth, and any one could see that their minds were stupid, ugly places. What good do you suppose it did them to have their bodies walk through delights? They did n't have half so nice a time as Katie when she walks down Durham Street. Oh, girls, every time you meet a great thought or a noble person or a lovely view, in a book or anywhere else, just open your mind and say, 'Live there!'"

Hilda paused, aglow with her own eloquence; it entertained her to present transcendentalism made easy. But she was a little disappointed at the effect on her auditors, who looked more perplexed than edified.

Suddenly a factory whistle, near at hand, unable, seemingly, to stand the holiday any longer, blew, sharp, vicious, interminable, for a short eternity, its hideous protest against civilization. Like the escaping agony of the souls pent within those dreary walls, it sounded to Hilda.

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When voices were audible once more, Maggie spoke slowly.

"That 's real pretty, what you say," said the girl sadly. "But I don't never see much that 's nice to put into my mind at home, or up in the shop. And" — she spoke low, with a look of shame — "I can't read very good. I can't meet them people in books, that way you told."

Gentle Katie, too, was looking wistful; indeed Hilda caught a most unusual expression of protest on her face.

"I like to see nice things in me mind," she sighed, a little bitterly. "But I do wish I could see them with me eyes, too. It 's fourteen years I 've been working, and never a week's holiday have I had to get into the country, never one. As I come along this morning, and saw all the lovely houses, and those big trees, just blowing and talking, and the grass and all, I felt so queer, I can't tell you. I tried to be glad other people had all that; — I am glad," she spoke with pathetic effort; "yes, I 'm glad. But why can't we have it, too? It 's all wrong, something 's all wrong, something 's wicked, Miss Lathrop."

"Why, Katie!" said Hilda weakly. She had no idea that the dreamy girl was capable of such an outburst. Her graceful moralizing seemed insulting, in retrospect.

Katie's thin cheeks were burning and her gray eyes aflame.

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"It is n't for myself I 'm thinking," she declared. "Don't you think it 's for myself. It 's for all the rest of us, all them little children, round where I live; would n't they like grass like this to play in? Would n't they like sweet air to breathe? And the girls, 't is n't that they can't have fine clothes and lots of fun that I mind; some of them wants that, most of 'em; but I know these are n't the things worth caring about. But it 's the chance to know all these beautiful things you tell us, the chance to read great books, to see pictures, to see things would put the look into their eyes you 've got in yours. Why don't they have the chance? What have they done that they can't have it? Tell me that! It is n't right, 't is n't right, Miss Lathrop, and you can't make it right!"

"I — I don't want to make it right," stammered Hilda. She was smitten to the heart by this revelation of a blindfold sense of wrong, outrage, and despair.

"'T is n't easy" — it was Maggie speaking, in her soft, slow, heavy voice — "it is n't easy to care much about beauty and all, when you 're hungry."

"Were you ever hungry, Maggie? Were you, Sonia?" asked Hilda.

Sonia laughed, — a bitter, sudden laugh, — and said nothing.

"Bless you, yes," Maggie spoke cheerfully, with an air of protecting affection. "I 've gone to work

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this last winter when I could n't stumble hardly along the streets. It 's the shame of it is the worst," Maggie went on impersonally. "One day, in January, I had n't had no work but two or three days in the week for three months, an' I had n't had no breakfast, nor no supper the night before, an' just a cup of tea an' some bread for dinner, — they sent for me to the shop, an' I went, an' sat a-sewing, an' things went round queer-like, an' my Cousin Delia, she was working to the same place, she leaned over an' poked her elbow into me, an' 'Maggie,' she says, 'Maggie! Stop lookin' so! Everybody 'll know what 's the matter with you!' I was that ashamed, I set straight up an' went right on. I got my money that night; but I was so dizzy going home, I feared they might think I was drunk. My supper did n't taste as good as I thought it would, though," ended Maggie, in a tone of disappointment.

"You need not pay the rent," announced Sonia with an air of discovery; "at least, not for a long time. And clothes you can go without always. And you can live and be very cold. But you cannot get over the habit of eating. That is great misfortune."

The life of these three girls rose before Hilda as she listened, and she saw, not these only, but the many others, sensitive, eager, wistful, — capable of joys as fine, of desires as sharp, as any daughters of

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privilege. Her heart ached as if she herself had felt the gnawing pain of that faintness of body, the more gnawing pain of the hunger of spirit. An impulse largely intellectual had sent her to live among the poor: now, she met at close range the problems of poverty, and bad as they had seemed when stated in the mass, they choked her as she felt their pressure on three individuals she loved.

She was exhausted, moreover, by mere contact with these things; by breathless nights throbbing with painful sounds, by the squalor of her surroundings, by the confinement of the city. The dusty verdure of the trampled park, that seemed so exquisite to her companions, brought her no refreshment. As she listened to the desultory talk of these disinherited, so unconscious of their own pathos, the yearning depths of her spirit moved toward them with an unspeakable compassion.

Her breath caught in her throat; she rose abruptly and walked away to the edge of the water. The sobs would not be controlled.

Her friends gazed after her, a little bewildered. She looked very girlish as she stood there, with her air of delicate distinction at once accented and softened by her agitation. Despite Hilda's sweet comradeship, despite her simplicity of dress and manner, she had, quite unconsciously to herself, seemed to these working-girls a creature set somewhat apart from them, by virtue of her subtle mastery of the

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arts of living. Her breakdown in control seemed suddenly to sweep away a barrier, to give her to them wholly and forever.

An instant's pause, and Katie sprang to her side.

"Dear heart!" she exclaimed, as a big tear rolled down Hilda's cheek; "it's all wore out you are. You 'd ought to have a good rest."

Hilda leaned her head for a minute on the shoulder of the younger girl, then flung herself down full length on the grass among the daisies; in a moment she looked up defiantly, with cheeks aflame.

"Why should n't I cry?" she exclaimed. "What else can I do, — when you girls talk about being hungry, — and I know it 's true, and your hearts and your minds are hungry as well as your bodies? Why should n't I cry, — as much as if you were my own little sisters?"

Katie and Maggie looked puzzled. But in the dark and battered face of Sonia a light of rapture dawned.

"You weep, — for us!" she exclaimed, with her curious accent.

"You see, dear," Maggie was explaining, a motherly look in her heavy face, "we 're used to it. It ain't worth your crying about. It 's too hard for you to hear such things. I ought never to have said 'em. And you know to be hungry don't take you away from God; sometimes I think it brings you nearer."

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"And think how much you 're doing to help it," said Katie; "you and the other ladies. Not the hunger of the body, — that you can 't help, I know, — but the other worse kind. Now you 've come, we 've not got no call to feel that any more. All the girls that come to the House, you 'd ought to know how different it is with them. Why, they used to talk all the time of silliness," — Katie tossed her head, — "and now it 's all books and pictures an' poetry. Annie Cronan, she 's going to be married soon, and she said to me, 'Ain't it lucky I did n't get engaged before I knew the Langley House? I 'd have got me a set of plush furniture sure, an' now I 'm going to have a wood floor and a rug, and wicker furniture stained green, and those plaster angels on my walls.'"

The tears were no longer in Hilda's eyes, but they welled up hotter than ever in her heart, even while hysterical laughter seized her. It touched her inexpressibly to be consoled thus sweetly by these pallid victims of the society that had nourished her own life with beauty and joy.

But Sonia's dark, keen gaze was fixed on Hilda's tremulous eyelids, and the flushed, clear-cut face.

"You weep — for us!" she repeated slowly. "Then the day of freedom is near."

Hilda shook her head: "I am only a girl, Sonia. There is nothing I can do," she sighed.

But the other went on, stumbling, exalted, un-

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able wholly to communicate her ideas, but imparting her full emotion.

"It is like my Russia. There too, — yes, — the nobles, — they that live delicately, — the rich, — they join the peasant, the workers. For freedom they fight, they die. From the universities, from the court, they come, they teach us, they are exiled, all things they suffer, all. It is high, it is noble. But it is there no good. There is too much czar, too much government. You kill one czar, another comes. The government, it ees too big, no one can stop it. But here, — it *ees* the people that *ees* the government, — not so? You, then, the people, if you awake, if you see the poor what they are, what they need, — then freedom shall be. We are too eegnorant, we poor, we cannot say, we cannot tell nossing, we can not alone make freedom. We are not the st-rong, not the wise. The st-rong, they do not know, not see. But you come, you see, you weep. The leetle shildren, you find them in dirt and hunger. You find the workers that sorrow; you see, you weep. Zen you go back, and you tell. Life, leeberty, ze pursuit of happiness: — no, there are zousands haf it not! Our country, she desire the freedom of the poor, she haf not reach it. You tell the st-rong these things, they believe you, they be sorry, they make the laws new, to be as you desire, as America, she truly do desire in her heart. F-r-eedom, she shall come, you shall bring her."

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Sonia's little sallow person seemed ablaze with glory; her eyes were on the face of Hilda, — a face very white and sad.

Hilda shook her head.

"I can do nothing, — nothing," she said.

"If you can do nossing else," replied Sonia, calmly and unexpectedly, "you can gif your life. You can be, — how do you say? You can be one martyr. That, too, is good."

The girls wandered off after this, and Hilda sat on the rank grass, thinking, brooding.

Martyrdom! Yes, if one but saw how! Easy enough in Russia, where one could fling one's self in anguished, heroic protest against definite tyranny. But here, in America, the evils of civilization appeared to her wholly elusive. She saw in them for the moment only the slow, diffused, inevitable process of corruption in a great Idea: again the fatalism of democracy overwhelmed her spirit. To quicken new hungers as she had done with Katie, — was it not to bring curse instead of blessing? To agitate as Sonia would have her, — was it not to play a futile rôle?

And yet, the day, as she looked back upon it, brought a strange tranquillity to her spirit. Jogging homeward in the crowded trolleys through the close evening air, while the bunches of coarse flowers drooped withering from her friends' fingers, a deep peace came to her. The horrors which had found

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their climax in the dream engendered by reading Nietsche melted away, not by intellectual refutation, but by a better process, — by the irresistible tenderness which bound her closely and gratefully to the weary lives at her side. Our spiritual revivals, fortunately perhaps, do not follow the lines of logic. However irrationally, Hilda this evening felt her dry faith in democracy renewed by the treasure of fellowship with the humble. The reality which she had sought in vain throughout her girlhood was hers at last; she felt herself visited by a new revelation of love.

Suddenly, as will sometimes happen, a light of memory broke on her mind. The two faces of Consolation which she had seen bending over her troubled sleep, comforting her after the terrors of the dream of hate by a love made visible, had been no fantasy of the night, but the transfigured faces of Katie Donovan and Maggie Murphy.

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CHAPTER XIII

SEEN FROM ABOVE

"HILDA, I want you to come away with me; will you?"

The speaker was Mildred Ellis. She had found Hilda sitting dispirited by her open window, gazing at the back tenements, which exhaled the sickening July heat from their blank surfaces.

"No, thank you, Mildred," answered Hilda in a toneless voice, continuing to stare at the dark openings into wretched interiors afforded by the opposite windows, and at the one spindling tree — "Genus Backyardius," she had long ago nicknamed it — in the square brick yard.

Mildred placed her hands gently on her friend's shoulders.

"But you will," she said, in a voice that, though low as Hilda's, thrilled as some voices will with buoyant undertones, — sweet echoes, as it seemed, of some distant melody. It was this quality in Mildred's voice, even more than the underlook of joy, which in times of greatest stress never faded from her face, that made her move among the ceaseless sorrows of Lincoln Street as an unfailing consoler.

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And Hilda went; obstacles having been mysteriously smoothed away.

"Mildred," she said, resigned to the delightful sense of progress without effort, as the train sped through reaches of green country in the morning light, "I 'm sorry to be so stupid, but I can't seem to talk. Do you mind?"

Mildred made no answer; she only touched her friend's hand with her finger-tips, very lightly, as a child touches something precious.

Later in the day Hilda roused herself. The train was rushing among abrupt wooded hills, and a brook, brown as Mildred's eyes and with kindred lights agleam in it, danced merrily from its cool home of mosses beside the track.

"Where are we going?" she asked for the first time. "Is it far away?"

Mildred flashed a smile at the landscape. "No; not far away; only far within," she answered.

It was after sunset and the lights were mystical when they reached their destination, a gray stone building, high among murmurous woods, overlooking wide-rippling water. As they drove up, a sound of singing was wafted out to them, — singing that, like the tones in Mildred's voice, seemed to come from times remote and depths unfathomed, a pilgrim strain, as of wayfarers in centuries long past, greeting a vision still in our day long future. Within the building all was bare and cool, but fragrant

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with the breath of unseen lilies. Sitting by the window in her small, fresh room, Hilda saw no longer sordid tenements through reeking heat; her eyes wandered downward, past softly tossing beech-tree summits, to a twilight meadow, blossom-starred, that led to far reaches of silvery water, beyond whose pure expanse surging crests of mountain rose spirit-like, till "earth had attained to heaven: there was no more near nor far."

She had already seen, moving about the halls, silent figures, each, like Mildred, wearing an ebony cross by her side. She glanced curiously round at supper, — a brief, simple meal, where talk was cheerful but subdued, and introductions few. Several of the thirty-odd people present she recognized. One or two she had seen threading the poverty-stricken districts of her home-city; she remembered that she had been struck always by the high look of gladness in their eyes. Other faces were known to the public at large: one, that of a woman novelist, whose books, penetrating with stern passion the human tragedy that modern industrial conditions engender, had thrilled the community to a shocked protest; another face, strong, plain, and kind, instantly suggested a camp among wounded soldiers, and large adventures of relief; another, fair and wistful, belonged to a society leader, who amazed society now and again, but was placed too high to alienate it. One or two working-women, friends of Mildred's,

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Hilda saw there also, their weary faces settled into lines of deep content, alight with joy as Mildred's smiling eyes met theirs. But most of the company were strangers.

"You are to go and come as you please, dear Hilda," said Mildred that evening; "there are harebells in the woods, and lilies, and you will find books downstairs. After this evening, there will be no talking. We shall be here a week. The chapel is always open," she added, "and the bell rings for the offices. But you must only come just when you wish."

Hilda did wish that evening, and knelt with the others in the high-arched chapel, while the wonderful singing rose and fell, and the lilies, among soft lights on the altar, swayed a little in the breezes from the starlit woods, dimly seen through open doors and windows. It was like the chapel of the Grail in old romances, thought the girl, far in the depths of the forest, with angels ministering around. The service moved onward in familiar lines, though with enough of strangeness to deepen that curious sense of having escaped our restive imprisonment in time, and journeyed, backward or forward, on the wings of worship, ancient, undying.

"Save us, O Lord, waking, and keep us sleeping: that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace," chanted the congregation.

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Presently the priest was speaking, — a stern-faced man in middle life, whom Hilda recognized at once, though she had never met him in the flesh. Father Phillips was a man much at odds with his generation, yet modern in his every fibre; a man of battles, leader of reforms, doggedly devoted to the interests of organized labor, an abrupt, paradoxical figure, scouted of newspapers.

"Friends of the Holy Way," began Father Phillips, "we are gathered together from the distant places, where, often in solitude, always in simplicity of life and poverty of spirit, we seek, according to our vow, to follow the footprints of the Saviour. We believe that the voice of the Master speaks to us as to our greater comrades of old: 'Come ye apart into a desert place and rest awhile.' What shall that rest be? No cessation of action, — though some of you, I know, are very weary in body, — but deepening of action. Do not let us forget the problems that press so desperately upon us, — I know you cannot do this if you would, — but let us look at them from above. Let us seek the larger sense of the movement of human destiny, under the guidance of the Spirit of God: let us gain anew the Vision of the Holy City, coming down from God to be with men. We are to enter together that hidden world of prayer, wherein abiding we know that failure cannot be, because through failure alone comes salvation. The Lord be with you."

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"And with thy spirit."

"Thy Kingdom come."

"O Lord, come to thine own."

"O creative Word, who while on earth didst not disdain to be known as the Carpenter, grant sight to those blinded by luxury and deliverance to those bound by want, that the rich may joyfully follow the simplicity of Thy most holy life, and the poor may obtain the inheritance of the meek; and the hearts of all may be set with one accord to discover the way of salvation: through Thy mercy, who for our sakes didst become poor, that we through Thy poverty might become rich. Amen."

"O Thou that makest men to be of one mind in an house,"

"We wait for thy loving-kindness, O Lord, in the midst of thy temple."

"O Lord of hosts, who didst guide our fathers out of the House of Bondage: bind up the nation's wounds and make us whole. Help us to close the widening chasm between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, casting therein the insolence of riches with the rancor of poverty; so may we establish the Republic, and build in America the Holy City foretold by the mouth of holy prophets since the world began. — We ask this in His name who giveth integrity to states, the desire of all nations, Jesus Christ. Amen."

The murmured voices of the worshippers died

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away, and the priest rose, extending hands of benediction: —

"Bless us, O Lord, with the vision of Thy Being and Beauty, that in the strength thereof we may work without haste and without rest."

Hilda slept that night as she had not slept for many a long week, and wakened to the carolling of birds in the tree-tops below her window. She was much out of doors during the still peace of the days that followed, drawn indeed at times into the chapel by the almost ceaseless worship, or the strong meditative words of Father Phillips, yet craving more the high solitude of hilltop or lakeside, or the fellowship in silence of the wide terrace, where almost always some black-robed figure sat reading, and would glance up in friendly fashion, more loving than words, as Hilda slipped by. At first, the roar of the world seemed all the more deafening and bewildering, now that she no longer formed a part of it, but during the first day it subsided slowly, like a retreating tide, withdrawing further and further, fainter and fainter, toward the edges of consciousness. On the second day, her nature arose in anger, rebellion, aversion, against the awesome, encompassing silence; she felt scared and naked, deprived of the dear familiar protection of ceaseless babble wherewith we timid mortals desperately exclude the consciousness of watchful eternity. She waked on

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the third morning to find this fierce resentment passed away, replaced by still ecstasy, such as she had never known, in the pure consciousness of Being. A passage from Emerson was on her lips, she had been repeating it in sleep: "Let him be silent — so shall he hear the whisper of the gods. . . . They alone with him alone." Was it God, was it the physical heavens, that brought such peace ineffable, she wondered, as, lying on the top of a gray rock, she sank, or soared, she knew not which, into the depths of the arching noonday sky? The warm earth carried her in its circling path, swaying harmoniously through space, its friendly home; and the whole universe, from the sharp grass-blades beside her to stars drowned in light but present to the eye of faith, proceeded from her spirit, the speech uttered by her to the Infinite, a word, barely adequate to her need, of prayer and thanksgiving.

It was no anti-climax, it was rather a fulfilment, when after this ecstatic hour in which the earth and more than the earth had been realized as the expression of humanity, she returned to the chapel for the noon service of intercession. The Church through these days had seemed indeed the representative of a humanity redeemed and liberated, claiming once more for all men a harmony with the whole: it lifted up toward an infinite Mystery of Love unshadowed the whole groaning and travailing creation, with strong crying, with desire that in its very

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intensity was at once creative and redemptive. So to-day the prayers arose: prayers for the poor in large cities; for the meek, that the inheritance of the fair earth might indeed one day be theirs; for the employers of labor, that the spirit of self-sacrifice in the cause of social justice might be born in them, and move them, even to the point of bankruptcy or commercial death; for wage-earners, that they might be awakened from apathy to the earnest demand for social justice, and that at the same time they might be preserved from bitterness, class antagonism, and the spirit of violence; for all students and professors of economics, that they might be delivered from moral and intellectual hesitation; for society at large, deliverance from the curse of greed, entrance into the democracy that is in Christ. No scorn nor sense of unreality was Hilda's as she listened to these petitions, joining in them more than she knew; she was well aware that here was no group of indolent persons, spiritually luxurious, comfortably shifting the burden of the world's woe to the broad shoulders of the Almighty, but a band of soldiers who had merely paused for breath, like St. George in his three days' fight with the dragon, to stanch their wounds by leaves from the Tree of Healing. Or had they really paused at all? Were they not rather fighting at that very moment, — attacking with the most potent of weapons the ancient enemy of the race, engaged most fiercely in

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the battle that from the dawn of history shifts its ground but never ceases, nor will, till history shall close, be either lost or won? So she mused, rousing with a start to realize that the prayers were over, and that Father Phillips was speaking: his meditation on the Nativity puzzled her at first, till she caught his line of thought, and suddenly recalled how much of the man's energy for a year past had been devoted to the cause of a certain reform, young and timid, unpopular alike with the learned and the rich.

"This joy may not be ours," he was saying. "We may not hold the Christ-child to our bosoms with Mary, nor with the magi and the shepherds proffer to His fair infancy the fruits of the earth or the wealth thereof. We may not behold that Child of Bethlehem, we may not care for His needs nor minister to His helplessness. But we may see in the world of men the eternal truth of His childhood. We may hold to our hearts the infant Ideals, the helpless Causes, that are just born from above and find no resting-place in the social inn, no birthplace save a manger. These we may cherish, these we may nourish. We may bring them gifts of our best. The lowly and the lofty powers of our nature may alike discover through divine leading, may alike reverently adore, those obscure and weak Truths hidden from the eyes of the mighty and the wise. So, if we minister to God's causes in their

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infancy, we may watch them grow and strengthen, till they become the redeemers of the race; yes, though to redeem they must first be crucified. And when at last they come in judgment, as shall surely one day be, we shall hear the words of reassurance, 'I was a stranger and ye took me in.'"

That night it seemed to Hilda that she had been bathing all day in the central fire, and that weariness and strain, tumult and despair, were from henceforth a forgotten illusion. As she lay in her bed, the breath of the new earth, wafted to her senses, seemed the breath of the new heavens also. Nor did this feeling wholly pass away, though, during the rest of the week, she neither sought nor found a renewal of her mystic ecstasy. The world returned once more to her mental vision: the faces of her sick children, the harsh questionings of her workmen friends, the sordid misery, the bitter wrong, with which for two years she had been surrounded. Yet in and around her own experience she felt the presence of a larger life; and the sense of the great movement of human destiny, of which Father Phillips had spoken, brought in itself relief through a certain majesty in sorrow. Proportions became clearer, problems at least defined: she seemed to find herself once more.

It was on the last day of the week that she sought an interview with Father Phillips. She had seen one after another slip into the little door that

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concealed his privacy, and come out with a tranquil look of release about the brow. But she hesitated a little at the entrance.

"I do not know that I should claim your time, Father," she said; "for I am not of your flock." Her own voice, after the days of silence, sounded like the voice of a dream-self in her ears.

"Not of my flock, but of Christ's great fold, daughter," smiled Father Phillips. The alert face was transfigured in those days with a brooding inward tenderness that would have seemed strange to his ordinary congregations.

Hilda shook her head. "Not of that either, I fear," she said, bluntly and sorrowfully. "I am no Christian. Christianity, to me, is a mythology; the noblest, it may be, that the race has conceived; the largest expression of the human striving. No more; no other."

"'Them also I will bring,'" quoted Father Phillips serenely. "It does not trouble me when you say that you are no Christian. He coming into the world lighteth every man. You may fix your eyes on the dust, but you see it by the light of the sun. Only, I grieve for the difficulties of the soul, that, choosing to walk in the pathway of sorrows, is not in conscious relation to the Source of Joy."

Hilda gazed at him, straight and soberly. The images of two years of life in a tenement district

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were gathered in her gray eyes; wide-distended, terrified, they saw, not the sympathizing face beside her, but the manifold sorrows of the world.

"I think I shall not tread that pathway any longer," said she slowly.

A pause fell in the room.

"Where does it lead?" she resumed, her voice meanwhile gathering passion, protest, vehemence. "Nowhere. Griefs thicken around me; sins rise grim and terrible. The stupidities of men lie like great fallen trees across the trail. Father, I must escape."

Father Phillips said nothing.

"I want my own path again," the girl went on. "It was a gentle path. I walked it with a pain in my own heart, to be sure, but it seems now as if what happened to one's own heart were a small thing, even to one's self. I want to return to the world where ideals soothed but never stung, where high standards were a private luxury of one's own mind, where the tragic was fine material for literature, and grief only added pathos to the appeal of beauty. I must go back."

"Can you?" said Father Phillips.

Hilda drew a long, slow breath.

"Never," she murmured.

Father Phillips was silent, watchfully, though she waited for him to speak.

"But I must find something to lean on!" she

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cried presently. "All the stock idealism with which I entered life has faded away. Nothing is left me but a great helplessness. I am dizzy."

Father Phillips leaned forward. "Tell me all about it," he said quietly.

Then the impressions of two years gathered themselves together and shaped themselves upon Hilda's lips.

"I reverenced the movement for social reform," she began. Slowly the sentences came, for they rose from the depths. "Now I see nothing in it but opiates that deaden sensation and quicken disease. I hoped in the Church, though I was not one of her children: she seems to me now the greatest instrument of moral self-deception ever invented by the race. I believed in the great centres of disinterested learning. I see them now false to the democracy that gave them birth. That democracy was my religion: I trusted it was liberating love: it is liberating greed. And worst of all," she ended with a swift turn, smiling half whimsically, "I cannot bear, I do not want to bear, the knowledge of what the Simeones have to suffer."

Hilda paused, exhausted by her own sincerity. She did not realize that in her very power of speech the healthful influence of the week was manifest, since despair that can formulate itself is no longer desperate.

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"'Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,'" meditated Father Phillips to himself. "The forms change, but the mood endures."

"Mood!" exclaimed Hilda, fired with indignant disappointment. "I am not interested in my own mood. I seek an answer to the eternal problem of the race. You, — where do you find it, — the answer?"

"My answers are all very old-fashioned," sighed Father Phillips. "You know them as well as I. It is from the rock of your own despair that the waters of refreshment must gush out, and I fear that I cannot play the part of Moses. Look within; has the week brought you no light?"

Hilda mused for a moment; in the silence the strains of a hymn drifted to them from the chapel —

> "Brother clasps the hand of brother,
> Stepping onward through the night" —

sang the voices.

"Yes," said Hilda. "I have felt it. I have felt myself in the presence of a great company of lovers."

"Who are they?" asked Father Phillips.

"Those who are visibly here in the flesh, of course," she answered; "for I know that they stand in very truth for the surrendered life. But more are present, — a greater company, free from time or from decay. The prophets of love and

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freedom in every age; I am glad you put their biographies downstairs, — I have been reading them, from Isaiah to St. Francis, from Sir Thomas More to Mazzini. But there has been better still: those wonderful prayers. They speak of a deeper fellowship. They are the voice of humanity itself, yearning over its children. Where do they come from? Who prayed them first?"

"That no one knows," said Father Phillips. "They are of all periods, from the second century to our own day. They have sprung from the soul of man in every age, crying out for the presence of the Perfect among men."

"I have dreamed this week an old dream, forgotten in bitterness," said Hilda. "The dream of a Church invisible, the mother of the oppressed, the protector of the poor, the home of redeeming love."

"Hold to it," cried Father Phillips; the vitality in his low tones poured a current of life along the veins of his hearer. "Hold to your dream. It has sustained the race for nineteen hundred years. The principle of life is in it; for it has endured, though confronted, mocked, by a visible Church that is, as you truly say, often the world in disguise. The invisible Church, the home of love and freedom, is found in the hearts of the humble; this week, you have worshipped there."

"It has seemed to me," said Hilda, "as if power

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were in some strange way set free in this chapel."

"The only power that prevails," rejoined Father Phillips, "creative initial force; the force of prayer. What have you felt in these prayers that ceaselessly ascend? The baffled yearnings of a helpless humanity, flung into empty space? No; but a force strong and natural as the force of gravitation, flying swiftly to the Heart of Energy, and speeding thence, dynamic, to its end. In the visible world we fail pitifully: we blunder where we would bless, we hinder where we would help. Often our noblest efforts for good strengthen in seeming the powers of evil. But in the unseen, no impulse of compassion, no cry of the heart for justice, is ever lost. The prayers of the ages, slowly gathering, liberate a mighty force. It moves secretly, it moves slowly, but it moves surely. Through all the centuries, it makes for social redemption; it brings the Holy City that lies in the mind of God down to earth to dwell among men. If that city ever indeed abide among us, it will be a visualized prayer."

He had forgotten Hilda, but the girl recalled herself to him.

"Do you believe," she asked softly, her eyes fixed on the distant lake, "that day will ever come? Do you sincerely think — sentiment aside — that deliverance is on the way; that the imprisoned throngs of workers will one day be set free, and love will reign?"

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Father Phillips looked straight at her gravely. "I do not know," he said.

Hilda fixed questioning eyes upon him.

"I know nothing," he resumed, "but I hope all things. Watch! is the Christian word of command. We live in the light of a great though tremulous expectation. We know not at what hour the Son of Man cometh; at what hour humanity glorified, victorious at last, shall assume its reign. The vision tarries through the ages; through the ages we wait for it."

"But it shall surely come?" pressed Hilda.

Father Phillips shook his head. "Hope that is seen is not hope. I do not know. I do not see that it is revealed, by the sweep of history, by the reason within us, by the words of Christ, whether or no a Christian society is ever to be reached on earth. More than this, I do not think it is revealed whether society as a whole is to grow better or worse. When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? We have a pleasant good-natured belief nowadays in what we call Progress; it seems to me to amount to very little. I want to believe in the gradual moral and social advance of the race; I hope it is true, but I am not at all sure of it. My faith finds no resting-place there. I can certainly not read the signs of my own time in this light, not for instance in regard to industrial conditions. It is true, I think, that the standard of living is higher among

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the working-classes than it was fifty years ago; that there is more healthful discontent; that the impulse of brotherhood is finding in certain minor ways more practical expression. At the same time, much is bitterly discouraging: you touched on the bitterest point when you said that democracy, self-deceived, thinks that it is liberating love while it really liberates greed. So when I take a broader view. The majority of men have always lived defrauded of their spiritual as of their material heritage; the minority has always lived in a cold apathy of privilege, worse than the suffering of the poor. Perhaps it will always be so. None the less shall I love and labor. Before me, as an individual, the path of love, of voluntary poverty, of social service, lies plain. Life may always be a prison-house to the majority born into this world. I shall spend my strength, so long as it endures, trying to break down prison bars. Will even one yield to my efforts? I do not know."

Hilda's face had flushed red-hot as she listened to the deliberate words: "You can say that calmly?" she cried, anger, sorrow, disappointment, in her tones. "You can be content with personal duty, — personal salvation, — while you think it possible all the time that infinite malignity controls the world!"

Her voice died in scorn unutterable.

Father Phillips paused a little; then, after a

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slight hesitation, leaned forward. The golden light of late afternoon streamed through the room, and space seemed filled with the beating of unseen wings.

"I will tell you something," he said, "though I do not often care to speak of it. A great creed of social hope is mine. I believe in immortality."

The peculiar seriousness of his manner had given Hilda a curious sense of awe and expectation. The phrase which, through much reiteration, had lost all meaning, fell flat upon her ear.

"How then," Father Phillips was continuing, "can I be daunted or dismayed? Shame on us men, to whom is entrusted this great home, this fair earth heritage, and who make of it for hosts of our brethren a place of weeping and lamentation, a valley of shadows where no light is, whence the cries of the poor rise forever to the Throne of God! Shame on us every one if heart and soul and mind and body are not devoted to the effort to restore beauty for ashes, the spirit of joy for the spirit of heaviness! Yet if we fail we need not despair. In the sins of the poor I see for the most part, not their own personal wrong, but the result, the true expression, of the spiritual state of the respectable classes; in their moral as in their physical degradation, they are victims, not aggressors, and we who defraud them of life here, who condemn them to the first death, need not, I believe, fear for them

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the second. Rather I trust that for all the poor and the oppressed of the earth, fulness of life waits hereafter. As the child cries at birth, their brief sorrow here may be but the pangs ushering them into joy eternal, where is refreshment, rest, endless growth in divine beauty, the face of God, transforming them more and more unto Himself."

"Immortality, — the creed of social hope," meditated Hilda. "I had always disdained belief in personal immortality as of all dogmas the most fatuous piece of insistent human egotism."

"Egotism!" rejoined Father Phillips: "yes, if held by the egotist. So are all the other doctrines of Christianity; for instance, the Atonement. And I think it is well," he went on thoughtfully, "that for several generations the faith in Christianity should have been in many earnest minds lost or obscured, as it is in your own. This doctrine of immortality, for instance, was a terrible hindrance to social idealism. It engendered an intense sense of the moral responsibility of the individual, but socially speaking its tendency was fatalistic. It fostered indifference to the destiny of man on earth, prevented the oppressed from struggling and the oppressor from remorse. It faded, and lost its vitality, under the influence of the sceptical thought of the eighteenth century; the French Revolution followed, — the self-assertion of the people, the religion of humanity. An insistent impulse to realize brotherhood now

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and here has resulted from the loss of that lazy old expectation of the New Jerusalem."

Hilda stared. "You are saying just what I have heard Mr. O'Hagan say, and he calls himself an infidel," she said.

Father Phillips laughed. "Yes, I survey the same landscape that O'Hagan does, but I modestly think I stand a little higher, through no merit of my own, and command a farther horizon. Even now, I am so afraid of this reaction on human selfishness, that I do not dare bring the doctrine of immortality into great prominence in my teaching in public. That is why I told you that I seldom speak of it. But there are those who are ready to receive it, and to them it is restored, purified. While the heavens were closed to us, we were forced to direct our hearts and minds wholly toward men, and in the darkness a significant thing happened: we learned to love our brethren. Of course it was no new lesson. From the time that the words of Christ rang their holy music into the human heart, love has been a constraining impulse; but it appears to me that the nineteenth century changed that impulse of the heart into a deep conviction of the reason. The unconscious solidarity of the middle ages held the presage of it: the individualism of the Reformation checked it, yet deepened life in other directions; the age of denial came and did its work. A period is upon us when intelligent consciousness of the

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social whole will be the dominating force, and this in simple language means that men are seeking to make the love of men the controlling principle of social organization. But what pain that love brings with it to those sensitive to the actual condition of the race! Now is the time, then, when the intuition of immortality, long exiled, returns. It is our strong consoler; it nerves us in the social conflict; when all seems desperate, it upholds us. The other great truths of Christianity return also; all the strengthening assurances that the race may in verity be uplifted and purified till it is one with God. They return in the Body of the Resurrection; they come to each of us with a message of hope, not only for his individual soul, but for all humanity; they bring to the social whole the Easter greeting, which we translate Peace, but which means in truth Harmony."

Silence fell in the room. Hilda sat, her face bowed low in restful thought, seeming of a sudden to move in a universe that was no longer a house of shadows but a friendly home. Presently, however, she lifted her head, and pushed the hair back from her clear temples with a vigorous gesture.

"Christianity is so wonderfully adapted to the human need," she said with sad decision, "that human need has been quite capable of inventing Christianity. I see what sustains you in the eternal conflict. It is well, — for you. But how for me, — for all of us, the many, to whom your faith is

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but a noble dream? Give us something to live by, — we faithless ones who are, and shall remain, at the heart of the world's woe."

The longing of the week, of the years, had gathered itself into one desire, and Hilda's whole being was a tense, expectant question. It was a strange appeal, from the agnostic to the priest; but it did not seem strange to Father Phillips. He was one of the rare men with whom those far from his own faith found spiritual intercourse significant and reviving. He sprang to his feet, and with a swift gesture motioned Hilda out on a high balcony. The lake lay a sea of glass and fire in the sunset; the mountains rose like altars of amethyst, light behind light in receding ranges till the greater Light received them of a sky wherein color seemed one with life itself.

"Are you sure that there is no God?" cried Father Phillips; the vibration of exultant awe in his voice entered the depths of his hearer's personality and struck response from her central self.

"No," breathed Hilda.

"Sure that democracy is a failure, and that the meek shall never inherit the earth?"

"No," murmured the girl.

"Are you sure" — the voice was very low in this last question, so low that it could only just be heard — "are you sure that God has not suffered — does not suffer with the suffering of this world? Sure

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that this suffering, with which you have elected to be one, is not the law of release, for which the other name is redemption?"

A motion of the head was answer enough.

"Then turn your negation into affirmations!" The glow from the sunset struck full on the priest's face. "At the heart of the universe may be Love. Eternity may reveal life as blessing, and not curse, to all the burdened millions. Or it may be that to us it is given to reclaim the earth, at least for the generations yet unborn, till it becomes the free and fair heritage of all men. Watch, then; desire; work; and face the East. Fear if you must, — but fear is hope reversed. Live in the strength of hope. Life is not easy for you who cannot see the vision vouchsafed to some of us, the vision of the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. But it is possible. If you do not believe in Christ, you can follow Him; that is more important. You can seek, through the world's wilderness, the footprints of the Holy Way. Look!"

Out of the drifting western clouds with their daze of color, a golden peak, a dream of crystal, shone from the confines of the world.

"You cannot tell whether that point of gold be solid earth or melting vapor. Neither sense nor reason can tell you. If I know, it is only because my feet have trodden its pinnacles. You cannot know whether your vision of human society uplifted into

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the air of heaven be illusion or distant fact. You cannot know; but you can direct your stumbling steps thither. You can advance over all obstacles, no matter how slowly; you can nerve others to advance also; hoping with a hope that cannot die that the feet of men shall yet tread the cloud-like, lofty glory of their farthest ideal."

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As the train next morning bore Hilda, refreshed in body, down from the hill-country to the weary heat of the city, the rush and rumor moved to rhythm in her mind.

"O'er lands afar a golden light,
So far, so faint, so heavenly fair,
That mortal eyes deny their sight,
And say not earth but cloud is there.

"O'er truths afar a golden light,
So far, so faint, so heavenly fair,
That mortal minds deny their sight,
And say not fact but dream is there."

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CHAPTER XIV

SONS OF THE FUTURE

THE Fergusons had come, en route for Finsterland, and in the cool autumn days Hilda brought her friends to spend a week in a farm-house by the sea.

"Do you remember, Dorothy, when we used to play at sonnetteering, in Tuscany, your sonnet to American skies?" she asked. "I know it began —

> "'Ah, subtle-soft the skies of Italy!
> Their wistful azure pulses tremulous
> With the dim light of ghosts that yearn to us
> From out their past of ancient memory.'

And the sestette: —

> "'Ay, but where
> Shall Europe show thee such translucent air
> As bathes our West in glory crystalline?' —

I've lost the rest."

It was indeed under a heaven cloudless-clear that the two women were sitting, the voice of surging waters in their ears, the land behind them flushed with low sumach and berry bushes to a red glory.

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Dorothy sighed a bit sadly. "It is a long time since I wrote any verses," she said.

"Why?" asked Hilda.

"Verses have to be the expression of personal experience; for six years my experiences have been those of my babies."

"And your husband."

Dorothy's large silence enveloped her.

"Yes," she assented after a pause.

The sea dashed a whiff of mocking salt foam in their faces.

"Hilda," Dorothy said slowly, her gaze turned to the horizon, "are n't you lonely?"

Hilda drew a sharp breath. This meeting with the man she had once loved too well, and the woman she had loved still better, if deeds are the test of love, had drawn submerged things to the surface of her being. The waters were troubled; somewhere out of sight was there a storm raging?

"I have a husband," Dorothy went on, "whom I love with all my heart, and who gives me a wonderful devotion. I have two dear children. But nothing that has ever come to me has lessened life's essential loneliness."

"I do not think," meditated Hilda, "that it has occurred to me for some time to question whether I were lonely or not. Now that you ask me," — a light was breaking over her mind as she spoke, — "I do not think that I am."

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"Why not?" questioned Dorothy; "have you found God?"

"I dare not say that," responded Hilda, "any more than I dare deny it. But I have found Katie Donovan. You would n't understand, dear," she went on, as Dorothy's great puzzled eyes were turned on her; "I have made no personal ties so strong as in the old days, — so strong as that with you. But I have entered into fellowship in desire. That is the deepest union in the world, — deeper than fellowship in love, in knowledge, in belief. I feel it with Mr. O'Hagan, — with Mildred Ellis, — with my dear Katie. Where that union is, it does n't matter how far people disagree in conviction, nor how slight is the personal bond."

"No," said Dorothy; "I don't understand. Around my shores sweeps 'the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.'"

"Why?" wondered Hilda, grieving. "Why should true wedded love like yours disappoint?"

"Disappoint!" A rare touch of fire visited Dorothy's languor. She rose to her feet, a lovely figure against the gleaming sea. "It is the most real thing in this world of shadows. But — how shall I explain? Love is not all. My husband and I have not the same mental or moral horizons. I live for him and for the children. He treasures his joy in us that it may strengthen him to live for something beyond us. This makes me lonely. Into

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my moral world, — it was always a clouded world, you know, Hilda, — he never enters. When I try to enter his, I feel dimly that the sun is shining there, but I am dazed, — I grope as one blind. Ah!" she broke off suddenly, "why talk? Words tell nothing."

As Hilda's hand sought her friend's silently, a great compassion and also a strange joy were invading her. Dorothy had carried away, six years ago, all that seemed to make life tolerable; she had married the "beyond-man," as Hilda had laughingly called Lawrence Ferguson. Would she be Dorothy to-day? Those moments of common aspiration when she had knelt among strangers in the chapel by the lakeside seemed to her at this instant worth any marriage kiss. The very pain that had tormented her summer was manifest to her as the condition of her larger blessedness.

"We must go back," said Dorothy presently. "Lawrence will be growing restless for me. He leaves me," she added laughingly, "for weeks to go off for lecture tours. But when we are together he can't bear to have me stay away from him half an hour."

In effect they met Mr. Ferguson halfway as they scrambled back over the rocks to their party.

"I know that you two people have n't much sense of time when you are together," he called cheerily.

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"Especially after years apart," answered Hilda; and noticed with scarce a pang that to meet her husband after an hour's absence was more to Dorothy than to meet her friend after those passing years.

"I 'm grateful to you for the chance of seeing your friend O'Hagan," said Mr. Ferguson as they made their way back. Hilda had invited half a dozen of her Langley House friends to spend the day by the sea and meet the Fergusons. "He 's a strong fellow. But are all your American labor men so opposed to socialism?"

Hilda smiled quizzically. "One of the reasons why I 've been looking forward to your visit," she said, "is that I hoped that the sight of a respectable English socialist would convince my friends that one need n't want to blow up the city hall if one bears the name."

"You don't mean to say in this year of grace —" Ferguson was exclaiming; but here they came upon Mr. O'Hagan, Philip Mervyn, and Mildred Ellis, sitting in a little cove of sunbaked sand. Janet, at the last moment, had been prevented from coming by the claims of a Russian Jew family presented to her care by Mr. Simpson, and Mervyn was in a bad humor. The others looked content. Mr. O'Hagan's lank form was half buried, he was building a mighty edifice of sand, and his grim features were relaxed.

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"Here 's the Fort of Folly from the poem you were reading me, Miss Lathrop," he called gleefully: —

> "'Let the victors when they come,
> When the forts of folly fall,
> Find my body by the wall.'

I made it look like a factory to purpose. If I 'm not mistaken that tide of progress is going to wash it away in about an hour."

Hilda nodded with friendly pleasure. "I hate the tide-figure, though," she said; "I always did."

"That well-seasoned figure honored by hundreds of poets and reformers!" exclaimed Philip Mervyn. "My dear Miss Lathrop, where will your radicalism pause?"

Hilda shook her head at the ocean. "Miserable old figure! I hate it because it is true," she sighed. "And I hate the sea. I 've always been afraid of it. When I was small I used to run away from it as fast as I could from sheer terror, — trying to lose the fearful sound in my ears."

> "'The moving waters at their priest-like task
> Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,'" —

quoted Dorothy reproachfully.

"I can't help it, — I see another aspect. Great, hungry, sorrowing thing, — wanting forever what can't get, — moaning and straining, — image of human endeavor and of human delusion. How success mocks it! The tide creeps up, triumphing, —

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only to be drawn back with hideous certainty. I never feel colder than when the orator talks of the tide of progress! Does n't he see what remoter future he implies?"

Hilda laughed at her own vehemence and the others laughed with her, — all except Ferguson, who watched the tired face, the quivering upper lip and contracting brow with unobtrusive sympathy.

"You have n't got all there is out of it," he said in an undertone. Then, raising his voice to divert attention: "Allow me to cheer up this much-dejected figure by using it once more. I 'm going to call this noble fort the stronghold of the competitive system. And the tide is socialism. Come on there," — as the clear shallow edge of a big wave slipped and curled and rippled swiftly onward.

Mr. O'Hagan was making a wry face. "Say justice," he suggested.

"See here, O'Hagan," retorted Ferguson good-humoredly, "you and I have got to thrash it out. Why do you talk as if the members of the Socialist Labor Party were not your fellow mortals, let alone being your comrades?"

O'Hagan's brow darkened. "Because they 're a crew of mean and meddlesome foreigners," he replied with cheerful frankness. "Miss Abbott, she tells me I 'm great on prejudices. Well, I 've got one of them prejudices against the socialists

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and I'm not goin' to deny it. Look at the way they broke up the labor conference at Danston."

"You'll find that socialism does n't mean at all the same thing here as in England," said Hilda. "It is n't a native growth as yet, but a foreign importation, — and I must confess that it has unfortunate representatives." Mr. Mervyn was nodding. "It 's a poor, helpless, violent sort of thing. I really have given up laying claim to the title. What 's the use of calling one's self by a true name if it means a false thing to your hearer?"

"If the name is true, I don't see why you hesitate," said Dorothy. "Your business is to speak the truth, not to worry whether your neighbor understands it."

Hilda smiled. "I 'm at least enough of a socialist to challenge that," she answered. "Truth-telling seems to me a social problem. I have not only to know what I think and to say what I think, but to convey what I think. One task alone would be sufficient for a poor mortal, but I surmise that we are not in friendly relations with the eternal verities till we reach the last term. Really, I have given up in despair. For a year and more, I have been simply a Listener, — a Listener in Babel."

"Oh, Hilda, you have n't changed a bit!" cried Dorothy, putting her hands to her ears.

Hilda looked to Ferguson in humorous appeal, for no man could thread his way with more zest

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among meandering subtleties. But at present he was absorbed in driving direct for the mind of Mr. O'Hagan.

"Mark my words," he was saying. "In ten or fifteen years you labor men will change your tune. The capitalists themselves will force your movement into socialistic lines. Moreover, hate the socialists as you will, trades-unionism, even now, is making straight for socialism."

"Don't see it."

"You're developing a new collective consciousness in regard to industrial affairs, for one thing. You are training the working-people in the principle of association. That is why you are the most educational force the nineteenth century has produced."

"You know the labor movement in England only, Mr. Ferguson," Philip Mervyn interposed coldly; the clean-featured lawyer and the labor leader found mutual understanding difficult, and if truth were told seldom tried to attain it. "I may add," Mervyn went on, dropping his voice, but still perfectly audible, "that you would not give the movement in this country your sympathy if you knew the corruption with which it is riddled."

O'Hagan rose abruptly, his strong features working, controlled himself with difficulty, and walked away. Hilda reflected mournfully, not for the first time, how disastrous a thing is inopportune candor.

"Bless you," replied Ferguson, raising his voice

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so as to be heard at a little distance, "that's all right."

Mervyn frowned, perplexed, and Mr. O'Hagan turned with an undisguised stare.

"That kind of thing," Ferguson went on, "is a stage through which all democratic organizations have to pass. The bad methods of the unions are simply the bad methods of your politics over again."

"Well! You bring us cold comfort!" exclaimed Hilda. "The evils of government have driven my socialism back into Utopia."

"Those highly discomforting evils are simply incidental to democracy learning its lessons," retorted Ferguson cheerfully. "For that matter, there's more good in a lot of what you call corruption than we moral aristocrats will acknowledge; it's often a case of publican morals versus Pharisee morals. Don't you see the significance of Tammany, with its blindness to civic thrift and honesty as you conceive them, and its generous if interested readiness to provide an unlimited number of individuals with 'jobs'? It's the gigantic reflection in public life of the ethics of the 'under man,' the unprivileged class, as a competitive system has made them or left them, set 'at large,' with full power of self-expression. The spectacle is grim enough, but it is far from hopeless. And the beauty of it is, that when the evil in that sort of thing gets out into the light of day, it can't last. We take a good step

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forward when bad tendencies gain power and publicity."

"I like that optimism, Mr. Ferguson," cried silent Mildred, and Hilda felt the pleasant warmth she remembered of old, at the touch of the man's life-communicating vigor.

"Wait twenty-five years," Ferguson was continuing with animation. "I 'm prepared to predict that within that time you 'll see a big rally of the followers of the better way in New York, and they won't win only in the aristocratic region either. Not," he added, "that the fight will be over; it will outlast us, probably."

"But how are you so sure of a favorable end? Plenty of nations have made moral shipwreck, why not we?" sighed Hilda.

"History does n't leave her experiments half finished," Ferguson replied. "And your national experiment is just begun. Democracy looked like one white light to the prophets who hailed it from afar. Moving within it, the drama of a world unfolds."

"Had I been consulted," — Hilda noted with amusement, as Philip Mervyn spoke, how thoroughly American he looked, as compared with Ferguson's more substantial type, — "had I been consulted, it is not in democracy that I should have played my part on this planet. I can't see anywhere in democracy a safeguard against corruption and

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ignorance. There 's a virtue discredited even by our philosophers to-day as un-American and monkish; its name was obedience, and every civilization possessed of harmony and order has been based on it. We now present the spectacle of a society based on the reverse principle of self-assertion, and I cannot say that the show appears to me admirable. From recent emigrants to multi-millionaires our people are imbued with profound lawlessness. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that deference to right authority is necessary to noble living."

"That is why I am a Catholic!" cried Mildred impulsively. "Men have both to obey and to be free. The Catholic Church in all its branches, living its life within the democratic state, seems to me to correspond to a psychological necessity; it is going to be the most significant sight that the twentieth century will see."

O'Hagan held out his large hand, and grasped the slight fingers with a crush that made Mildred wince.

"It will be a mighty interesting thing, I grant you, to watch Catholicism in America," assented Ferguson, looking at Mildred with some admiration and surprise. "And a mighty dramatic thing too. Personally, I stand outside of all religions. But I hope the Roman Church won't lose sight of its real opportunity in the effort to get control of secular affairs. But, Mervyn, don't you see how you are

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playing into my hands? I 'm as authoritarian as yourself, only instead of harking back to feudalism, I look forward. America perish? Democracy perish? (The question is the same.) Why their first act — the act of individualism — is not played out yet, the whole act of socialism is to follow — "

"Oh, socialism!" remarked Mervyn. "It bears no relation to human nature as it exists."

"Since, as I have just remarked, it is a creed for the future," returned Ferguson a bit dryly, "I prefer it to bear relation to the human nature that is going to exist."

Mervyn shook his head. "You won't get much change in human nature till the end of time."

"Sure? — Now why should our mercantile civilization be any more permanent than the feudal civilization it replaced? It won't; the only question is, what next?"

"What social order was ever able to foresee its successor?" pondered Hilda.

Ferguson looked at her with brows intent.

"You touch the peculiar feature in the situation," he replied. "The race is beginning, as evolution goes on, to possess dimly the gift of foresight. Our conscious desires are to play an increasing part in shaping our destiny."

"Doubtful whether our destiny will be any the better," scoffed Mervyn.

"I decline to discuss the reality of progress. The

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afternoon wanes," smiled Ferguson. "But however fierce my quarrel with the evils of modern life, I do not question in my saner moments that the higher principles of social ethics are consciously at work in a larger number of people to-day than ever before."

The disillusion with church, state, university, and benevolence in which her summer had been passed rose like a dank sea fog over Hilda's spirit as he spoke.

"As for your America," — her friend was answering her unspoken thought, — "if you feel discouraged just get off and look at it from the perspective of Europe. See the scale of what you are attempting. The thing that bewilders and bothers us" — he kindled as he went on — "is that life expands as it ascends. No wonder that your agencies are imperfect, that your best elements disappoint, that the ideals of your founders are denied. Hope sees in two dimensions what experience works out slowly in three."

"Say four," suggested Mildred, "and allow for the incalculable."

"Four if you like, or more," assented Lawrence, looking pleased. "Certainly a mysterious x is at play in the world-equation. But contemplate your aim! No limited Platonic liberty of the elect, founded on a Helot class, but a fair and even chance for every human being, — discounting the

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forces of heredity which are in part beyond your control."

"We have a Helot class," fired Hilda.

"But under general protest when the fact is recognized. Your aim at least eliminates them. Are you allowed to try this audacious experiment on a small scale? A continent is entrusted to you. May you at least live in shelter there, training a homogeneous population? The peoples of Europe bring you the Old World to be re-created in the new! One would suppose that the task was sufficient; but"—he spoke thoughtfully—"I prophesy a time when not even your own continent will limit your responsibility; when against your will and conscience maybe, you will be driven to carry to races lower in the scale a life which you yourselves as yet but half possess." He paused abruptly, then resumed. "I believe you will succeed. You have no idea how buoyant American air seems in the nostril of a European. The free and just civilization may be centuries away; but it will come."

"'Cercando Libertá'!" All Mildred's friends were surprised at the readiness of her speech; but Ferguson had a curious way of setting people at their intellectual ease. "Don't you remember," the girl was saying, "those words in Dante? They always seem to me our national motto. Again and again we believed that we had found Liberty. The

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Puritans thought so first, with their vision of liberty of the spirit; the men of the Revolution next, with their vision of liberty of the state. The generation of the Civil War was convinced that they had fought the final battle. Every emigrant that comes to America thinks to find freedom here. They were all wrong. Liberty waits at the end of the journey; she is not a companion of the way. We Americans must climb our Purgatorial Mount before we can hope to find her, but she is waiting for us on the summit. Pilgrims of Liberty! It is the best name we can bear."

All were silent for a moment, then Mr. Mervyn turned to Ferguson.

"You think," he queried curiously, "that the free and just civilization in which you are fortunate enough to believe will assume the form of the socialist state?"

"I do," said Ferguson. "If our conquest of political and social equality is to be made worth while, a greater measure of industrial equality than we yet possess must follow. I should be ashamed if I did not hold that we can win it. As to the means, I no longer assert the complete socializing of the three rents. Of course socialists have always expected the principle of private property to obtain in all possessions which can be held for consumption. We may find it best to give even wider scope to this principle. That is for the future.

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Meantime the world heritage, material and immaterial, will be more equally thrown open to all men in proportion as we advance toward public ownership of public utilities, and toward collective control of industrial matters by the people at large."

Then Mr. O'Hagan spoke up.

"Lord!" said he, "it sounds pretty. But socialism means a lot more government, don't it? Government has never fought the battles of the workers; they 've got to fight their own."

Philip Mervyn took up the theme.

"Socialism might work with a race of angels; with a race of men it would simply result in a bureaucracy."

"I 've heard that before," sighed Hilda.

"You cannot make men good by law," Mervyn continued. "My friend O'Hagan" — the said friend made a wry face behind the lawyer's back — "agrees with me there. If Henry and John and Mark are decent men, they 'll behave decently in their industrial relations as elsewhere; if they are bad men, no system will improve matters. You 'll never get a better society except by getting better men."

Hilda clasped her hands. "Ah, I have heard it all many, many times before," she sighed again.

Ferguson smiled at her. "Let 's try a few questions," he said. "Mervyn, suppose you 've got your 'better man'; we 'll call him John; we 'll

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say he is Henry's employer. Will he enjoy paying Henry a starvation wage?"

"He 'll pay the wage determined by the market, whether he enjoys it or not."

"That was n't my question; will he enjoy paying it?"

"Naturally not."

"Now, suppose John is an Apostle John; won't he sacrifice a good deal of personal comfort, rather than shut off his brother from the necessities of life? Suppose Matthew and Mark are also converted individuals, also employers, and that they feel in the same way. You are going to tell me that they can't change the system." Ferguson raised his hand as Mervyn started to speak. "But go on! go on! When you have your individuals converted, — I quite agree with you that this is the first step, — what is going to happen? Nothing."

He paused a minute, but Mervyn was silent, and Ferguson resumed: —

"Social and political forms always express the moral consciousness of the mass of men. But this consciousness is in flux; it progresses. At a given moment society always includes a number of restless people who find the world in which they live intolerable."

"They desire a better country, that is an heavenly," Mervyn half scoffed, half sighed, under his breath.

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"Thy kingdom come — on earth," Mildred responded in a swift whisper.

Ferguson heeded neither interruption.

"They find the world in which they live intolerable," he repeated. "Times come — the cause and hour of their appearance is the secret of the gods — when such people are born in great numbers. As soon as this happens, they begin, slowly at first, to modify the world around. Social forms begin to express the new ideal. Change overcomes us, like the heaving wave. Such a time is here now! I twist your phrase backward, 'We never shall have a better society till we have better men;' — but when we have the better men, the better society follows. Those 'better men' are here. People have undergone a social conversion. Our great need is not to preach such conversion, but to experiment till we find how to express its demands in a changed system."

"People converted already! O Lord!" remarked Mr. O'Hagan.

"Why, look at us!" exclaimed Ferguson, turning on him, and continued stoutly, though everybody laughed: "I mean it. Are we conceited enough to consider ourselves an exception? Thousands are with us, — in political life, in the churches, the professions, the universities, — thousands, possessed by a larger conception than ever the past held, of social action as moralized. Hear even Nietsche, the

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Apostle of the Reaction, saying: 'I love him who is ashamed to see the dice fall in his favor, and who asks, "Have I played false?"' There 's less socialistic talk than ten years ago, I grant you; that is because the translation of sentiment into fact has begun."

"Sentiment does n't re-create the world," said Mr. Mervyn.

"Not when it runs amuck against the law of the universe. But the mere external march of things proves that this is n't the case now. Socialistic sentiment on the contrary coincides with an arising necessity. When you find," Ferguson went on thoughtfully, "that the forces of self-interest and of compunction are tending the same way, you may be pretty sure that they make for the reality of the future."

Silence fell on the group.

"Mind you," Ferguson went on presently, "I 've said nothing about times and seasons; nor am I in the least hurry, although" — he chuckled at some reminiscence — "I was in my youth. Indeed, I see great danger that these unmoral economic forces may carry us on too fast, and impose socialism on a world unripe for it. Then, to be sure, you will have your bureaucracy and corruption and all the rest, leading to the capture of the situation by two modern autocrats, the expert and the capitalist. But the way out is n't, as I see it, to throw one's self

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into the conservative reaction, strong though that promises to be, far less" — and here he bent his expressive, ugly face straight on Philip Mervyn's lean brown visage — "far less to assume the astounding rôle of the disgusted indifferent, which seems popular among certain of you young Americans. It behooves us to help forward with all the vigor we possess the moral transformation which is surely under weigh, running a race with the unmoral — democracy fraternal, as opposed to democracy plutocratic. It depends on you, and you, and me," again he scowled with tremendous earnestness on Mervyn, "which gets ahead; whether the democracy of the future is organized fellowship or organized greed. For my part" — his arms were clasped behind his head, and the expressive face scintillated with energy — "for my part, I 've done with spinning theories, and with criticism and speculation. I throw myself into the world as it is, and try to push it along toward the world I want it to be."

"Is that why you have accepted that position in Finsterland, in spite of the criticisms of your party?" Hilda ventured timidly.

"Why should he pay attention to them?" cried Dorothy, breaking a long silence. "They were as unkind as they were untrue."

"Not unkind in the least, my dear," her husband returned deliberately, "but certainly, as it happens,

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untrue. My socialism deepens with the years. But I am no longer contented simply to announce it. I wish to work toward it, although work involve many a compromise. Three things I see: the present order, in the immortal words of Dogberry, is most tolerable and not to be endured; it won't be altered in a hurry; and toward the new coöperative order, which, in all probability, I am never to behold, I shall work doggedly, and cheerily, till the end of my days."

At Ferguson's direct turn to him, a moment before, a dark flush had mounted slowly to Philip Mervyn's face. It had died away, leaving him as always, sallow, sardonic, and sad.

"The socialism of your theories will never come to pass," he said in a tone of depressed conviction.

"Who cares whether it does or not?" exclaimed Ferguson, and then, half penitently, noting the surprise of his hearers, "I beg your pardon; I did care once, — care as I cared for life itself. But I've learned wisdom. I look at socialism as I look at religion. It is a stream of tendency, the resultant of converging forces at work below the social surface, making toward an unknown goal. It bears us toward the future. We may ignore it if we will; or we may throw ourselves into it and help it on. This last is what the children of the future do, — the beyond-men, — those fortunate miserable people who respond to impulses as yet inoperative

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in the mass, see visions as yet contradicted by fact, move in a moral world too narrow for them, against which they constantly hurt themselves. You know what I mean," he added suddenly, turning to Hilda. "You were born a child of the future."

"I," cried Dorothy, rising swiftly as she spoke, and stretching out her arms to the illimitable waters, "I am a child of the past."

Her lips were smiling, and only Hilda recognized the bitter accent of confession in her words. So beautiful a woman as Dorothy — never more beautiful than now, as her dark eyes and blowing waves of hair glowed against the westering light — might say anything. Earnest as the others had been, not one of them, unless it were Hilda, perceived, far less resented, the egotistic note intruded on their high imaginings.

"You are a mother, my dearest," said Ferguson, gazing at his lovely wife with all but adoring reverence. "Motherhood creates the future."

A murmur of heartfelt assent rose from O'Hagan and Mervyn. The women were still; but Dorothy, unsatisfied, sighed herself into silence.

Hilda, yet moved by Lawrence's unexpected turn to her, was reluctant to repose on the dramatic commonplace. She spoke in a moment.

"It is very uncomfortable to be a child of the future; one does n't know what to do in the present. What do you advise?" She found herself waiting

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with absurd eagerness for Ferguson's answer. "To 'sit, and watch the future come'? Or to hold one's life of action and of prophecy apart?"

"A far more difficult thing than either," he replied. "That is, to live the life of the future in the present.

"Oh, the idealists of old had an easy time of it!" he went on, a bit sadly, — speaking out, as all his listeners felt, his full mind more clearly than he had yet done; "confident as they were that their own eyes might behold the desire of their hearts. If the apostles had not expected the second coming of Christ in their own day, Christianity would never have gained its impetus; if historic consciousness had been strong at the end of the eighteenth century, democracy would never have gotten under weigh. No Shelley could run his career to-day. We can't nourish ourselves on delusion any longer, — and I suppose we ought to be grateful. We are too strongly conscious of the scale and slow process of historic change. What is laid upon us is to work with unfaltering devotion toward the large social ends we see as good, while we know the achievement of those ends to be indefinitely remote, and know also that when they come they may wear an aspect strange to us. No, — it is not easy. It would be terribly easy, on the other hand, to slip back into the fatalism of consecrating our life to unrelated duties in detail."

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"Do you call that fatalism?" Philip Mervyn spoke for once without a tinge of cynicism in his manner. "I don't. It is not my idea of fatalism to do one's duty humbly and patiently, toward one's family, one's profession, and one's natural environment, leaving to the law which shapes our rough-hewn ends the future destiny of men."

Dorothy cast a glance of quick sympathy at the speaker, and Hilda thought in a flash how well-matched through their conception of life would have been this man and woman, touching each other for a brief moment in the swift drama of events, and drawn together by no personal attraction. Well! Dorothy was married to Lawrence, — and Philip Mervyn loved Janet Frothingham, whose passionate negations, of so different a type from his own, only accentuated the well-bred discouragement with things in general in which the young lawyer passed his days. It was useless to try to make a son of the future out of Mervyn. How admirable a son of the present he might, under happier influences, have become!

Meanwhile, Ferguson was answering Philip, with a respectful gentleness unusual to him.

"You are quite right," he was saying; "I should not have called the attitude you outline fatalistic. It is simply that of the children of the present, and it has a nobility of its own. Most of our best professional men and of our moral leaders are

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children of the present. The great fault of us radicals — your brilliant young friend Miss Frothingham is an instance in point, Miss Lathrop — is the tone of impatience and contempt which we are tempted to assume toward these admirable men and women. It is they who preserve the moral level already reached by the race; they hold the laggards of an earlier stage up to the best accepted ideals of purity, generosity, business honor, family devotion. Ah! We could never dispense with the children of the present."

When Father Phillips had summed up his social ideal in the word "Harmony," Hilda had remembered her mother's exquisite voice uttering the same word to a landscape of memories, — with how different a connotation! Now, Lawrence Ferguson's large outlook filled her with the pleasant sense of a fellowship wide enough to include even those from whom she had felt herself most sorrowfully divided.

"A dear friend long ago rebuked me almost in your words," said she. "I have been slow to recognize how just she was."

Ferguson nodded; he had risen, and was looking out across the waters.

"Yet, after all," he went on, "I think you can't quite dispense with the children of the future either. Poor things! They blunder badly enough. They don't understand themselves, and nobody else

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understands them. They do not begin to play as useful a part in the existing order as the children of the present. Injustice to the dignity of the actual is their great defect, and it often makes them bitter, not against individuals alone. All their activities are tentative, all their convictions riddled with inconsistencies. Yet through them work the impelling forces that carry us onward."

"Fine phrases," pressed Hilda. "Now tell me what they are to do."

"But that is just what they have to discover for themselves," Ferguson returned; "are they not moral explorers? And I assure you they have no easy task. Their work is to live so far as may be as members of the socialist state, in a society still antagonistic to socialism. In a world where democracy is just beginning to stir, they will feel their adventurous way to the true life of brotherhood: in a world where the divisions of privilege are unjust they will accept such privileges only as would in their opinion be open to all if justice obtained. Simplicity of life — democracy of practice — will be their watchwords. As to the special work they undertake, — there 's hardly a function in modern society which is n't capable of a democratic transformation that would shape it into an entirely new likeness. Think for instance of the opportunities for the artists who sacrifice their ambitions for great personal creation, and ally themselves with the

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people, aiming as Morris did to build up that solid foundation in the industrial arts without which they tell me that high art never has flourished. —Think of the journalist.". . .

But here Hilda's attention wandered, — a rare thing for her when Ferguson talked. When she came out of her dream, he was concluding: —

"Sacrifice is at a discount in modern society; ardent souls go to the confines of the civilized world in search of the chance for it. Fools! Calvary is always close to the metropolis. I imagine that we shall never again see martyrs of the pure idea. Thought is free; that battle is won, for the Anglo-Saxon races though not for the Latins. But when the need for martyrs is over, time shall be over too. The sons of the future will be martyrs of the idea struggling into fact. To join this noble army is the socialists' prayer."

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As Hilda sat by her window that evening, bathing thirsty body and soul in the sharp, keen fragrance of the sea, a paper was handed her. Dorothy had shown her other verses in the same handwriting in the days gone by; love-verses, delicately enamoured, far more beautiful than these. She lulled her spirit to a sad content as she read, and read again: —

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TO A LISTENING FRIEND

In vain the restless tidal passion heaves,
 Yearning to bring refreshment to the shore:
 In vain the waves their fragrant gifts outpour
On arid sands; though now a breaker leaves
High mark victorious, soon the ocean grieves
 As distant grows the low and sullen roar
 Of ebbing surge; one hope, forevermore
Thwarted, renewed, that weary heart deceives.

The waters moan defeated; yet their end,
 Their holy end, unwitting they attain;
At Heaven's call, their spirits swift ascend
 And bless the land with increase; fresh and free,
The wind that winnows their most bitter pain
 O'er earth's hot sins breathes ocean's purity.

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CHAPTER XV

NEW DEPARTURES

THERE were signs of a flitting in Hilda's quarters. Pictures were taken down, burnished copper pots gleamed from the packing-boxes, and the tenement house was again in clear evidence. Suddenly struck with dreariness, Hilda turned her back on the confusion and ran downstairs, to join the group of friends gathered for a last chat around the steaming samovar.

The settlement, which had seemed so daring a finality two years ago, had long since become to her thought only a halfway house. Her loyalty was deep toward this friendly shelter that awaited the social pilgrim in his bleak journey across civilization. She knew how many were encouraged to undertake that journey through the knowledge that the amenities of life need not be left behind by the traveller in the city wilderness; to be hostess in such a hostelry seemed to her one of the posts of clearest value in this bewildered world. Nor did she ignore the significance of the settlement as a meeting-ground for the forces of reform. But for herself, —

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she was wayfarer ever and the time of her sojourning was ended.

Father Phillips had spoken truly, however, when he told her that return to her past was impossible. Her mother, after over twenty years of widowhood, had surprised her circle of friends by marrying that kindly, wealthy, and Philistine gentleman, her cousin, Mr. Howard Brown. Delicately pathetic as ever in aspect, she still bore herself with the air of one who mingled with the world by compulsion; and the world in consequence adored her. Toward her direct and forceful daughter, Mrs. Howard Brown carried herself in a manner half tender, half reproachful; the affection between them was unbroken; but her marriage snapped the last tie of duty that bound Hilda to old associations. Now, by what path should she go forward?

Her old fervid desire to form one creed, and cling to it as a finality, had died away. It had been a desire rendered forever futile by a native largeness of vision, and by a training which had imbued her with consciousness of the unspeakable complexity of life. The revealing powers, alas! show us clearly enough the shining Alp of the perfect right, but set no guide-post to help us among the tangle of paths at its base. But Hilda had ceased to quarrel with uncertainty. She was content at last to choose and follow, with cheer, if not with assurance, a beck-

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oning trail, — aware that explorers are many, and that the radiant height survives the failure of the generations. "Live in the strength of hope," had said Father Phillips, and Lawrence Ferguson echoing him: "We believe that we are one with the tendency which best promises to bear the race onward, and we help it as we may." A mystic conviction that the vast forces which carry along the peoples, carry the individual also, had brought Hilda consolation; less by thinking than by the simplification of living, and by opening her spirit to the experience of the whole, her solution had come to her. After years of speculation and years of experiment, she dared at last to take the great word Socialism with confidence upon her lips, — not as a dogma of the end to be achieved, but as a description of the process to be furthered. If toward the greater word, Christianity, she remained silent, through profound distrust of the Church in history and in the modern world, nevertheless the image of a Leader of men dwelt in the secret places of her soul.

She was not the only person who stood that afternoon at the parting of the ways. Probably only a settlement could have brought together and held so long in close relations the little group that gathered around the samovar. Jessie Bancroft indeed had left them, — married, almost a year gone by, to a vigorous auburn-haired young reformer, head of a People's Institute not far away. But the other friends

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were all there, — Henrietta Morse, Mildred, Mr. Mervyn, Mr. O'Hagan, caught in an interval between labor committees, and, although working-hours were going on, gentle Katie Donovan.

"Westward Ho!" called a gay voice at the door, and Janet Frothingham entered the room, throwing off her wraps with a gesture as full of vitality as ever. Her step was a trifle less elastic than of old, but her beauty still glowed triumphant over sadness and fatigue. "I 've accepted the offer."

"Janet!" cried Hilda almost reproachfully.

"What offer?" queried Mr. Mervyn sharply, forgetting his usual drawl.

"The die is cast," answered the girl, half soberly, half lightly; "I 'm not going to spend my days any longer fighting against impossible odds for a dubious end; I devote myself no more to creating a decent environment for scattered individuals, while forty-nine fiftieths remain indecent still. No more classes and clubs and gymnasia and coffee-rooms for me. I 'm going to have my fling at conditions, I 'm going to cut at the roots of the evil, I am going to Colorado to edit 'The Anarchist Banner.'"

She looked around a bit defiantly. It was Mr. O'Hagan who took up her challenge. "Will that Simpson be there?" he asked, — putting the question on which none of the more highly organized could have ventured.

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Janet's eyes were cool and unabashed. "No," she made answer; "Mr. Simpson secured the position for me, and has made my arrangements. But in all probability I shall never see him again. He is going —" she checked herself.

Philip Mervyn heaved an involuntary sigh, — half relief, half distress. It is more or less comforting to know that the man whom you distrust is to be removed from the woman you love; but the comfort is mixed when you realize that however distant he be in body, his influence has passed like a transforming light or shadow over the landscape of her life.

"You do not mean to say that you will adopt the ideas of Mr. Simpson and preach anarchism?" Henrietta Morse queried with polite amazement.

"Why not?" — a white misery settled on the girl's face. "All I know is that this hideous torpor of assurance must be shaken from men's souls. Reason apparently won't do it; a little violence might. I am well aware that violence is the illogical expression of despair. I have given up logic."

"You are playing with fire." Philip Mervyn spoke with an abrupt accent that startled his hearers.

"Keep your distance then, — and 'ware the flame," was Janet's swift retort.

And in the glance that passed between them, the bystanders, their friends, gained sudden insight into

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the tense situation of these two honest spirits, — bound together by love, divided by the fatality of temperament and conviction. Despite Janet Frothingham's personal distaste for Simpson, the man had mastered her intellectual nature; despite the attraction which she could not resist toward the young lawyer, with his moral cleanliness, his mental clearness, and his chivalric devotion, she could never harmonize her life to his. She knew well that he was quietly ready to sacrifice prospects, home, profession, to follow her to the ends of the earth if so be he might win her favor, and the knowledge touched her inexpressibly; but all the forces of rectitude in her nature were arrayed against marrying him. What would be the end of their strange relation? No outcome, it seemed to Hilda and to Mildred, could be otherwise than charged with tragedy. Had either possessed a positive faith, glowing, magnetic, there might at least have been room for hope that the other might be in time drawn within its cheer; but their cold spheres moved in different orbits, the fires of the one burnt out, the other yearning to be kindled at cosmic fires not yet lighted. Was not such uncompromising idealism as theirs an undemocratic luxury? Hilda pondered, and turned away from the unanswered question with a refreshing memory of Ferguson on his way to Finsterland.

The tension lasted for a moment only. Philip

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Mervyn's feeling manifested itself usually in true Benedict-fashion by systematic snubs.

"You will agitate for Debs, I presume?" he questioned; "or, no, I forgot; Debs is of yesterday."

"I am not likely to agitate much in behalf of anything," answered Janet. "I expect to spend my energies in attack, not in defence."

"A useful occupation!" muttered Mervyn.

"It is the only one I can be honest in," retorted Janet briefly, with an electrical flash of feeling.

And her hearers knew that she spoke her real conviction. Hilda had come to love deeply, as many others did, the brilliant, sad, and seeming flippant woman. Only the day before she had seen Janet kneeling in a passion of sorrowful pity, the hot tears streaming down her cheeks, over the cradle of a dying blind baby, whose wizened body was an epitome of social disaster. She never forgot that scene in years to come, when her path and Janet's had separated far. Behind the agitator of notorious repute, she knew the rational, grieving woman; knew that Janet was actuated by no shallow instinct of intellectual revolt, entertained at its own audacity, but by deep, steady, inward loathing of civilization as it is.

"Don't do yourself injustice," she said gently. "You know you would n't edit this paper if you did not honestly believe in collectivism."

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"Well, yes," assented Janet, putting her head on one side; "I believe in it so long as there is no danger of our getting there. I mean," she went on more soberly, with a real effort to explain, "I do think the collectivist ideal the most sensible, economic, just, that men have conceived. But I fear it would be a terrible failure could one impose it full grown on a crude civilization like ours. I am afraid I think that only in a society which has ripened under aristocratic influences can socialism of any type be a good thing. As Arnold said long ago, social equality is the ideal condition, but it becomes a desirable practical aim only when standards of excellence have become so intuitive that levelling can be up, not down. Abstractly, I believe in socialism; practically, I fear that in modern America it would be a disaster; but I want to preach it, for I think it a good thing to set before people."

"I know you are sincere, Janet," reflected Mildred; "but I 'm glad I don't have to go through such a coil before I can live my solution."

"I suppose there 's not much danger that you will hasten the day of anarchism with undue rapidity," said Mervyn dryly. "May I ask the size of your organ?"

Janet's eyes danced. "It is very small," she acknowledged; "there are three others in the state. One is for single tax, one for public ownership, the

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other, — I forget the other. We are chiefly occupied with snapping at one another."

"Yours may live two or three years," said Mr. Mervyn with conviction. "You will hit the hardest. You are sure to make it clever."

"I expect to do so," returned Janet calmly. "I intend you to write for it."

A curious light flashed into the young lawyer's face. "Very well," he replied, and there was subdued exaltation in his tones; "truth to tell, I am thinking myself of moving to Colorado."

Janet saw her false move, and flushed, while an amused silence fell on the group; it was broken by Miss Morse, the only person present ignorant of the situation.

"Do you realize," she said politely, "the kind of people you are joining? Ten years ago they were trying little communistic experiments; to-day, they are editing little communist papers. Their motives are good, but the cranks can't help on the serious cause of social reform. What use do you expect to be?"

"My father was an abolitionist," returned Janet briefly. "I imagine he heard plenty of talk like yours in his day."

Henrietta was silenced; like most of us, she cherished a reverence for many cranks — when they were dead.

"To become the fanatic," commented Mervyn

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with undisguised feeling, "involves a tragedy of intellect."

"To remain the observer," retorted Janet, "involves a tragedy of conscience."

"I understand Janet's action very well," said Mildred sadly. "I was myself at one time very near making the final abandonment of reason in another way — by entering the Roman communion."

Janet's gesture shook off the distasteful parallel, but she did not discuss it. "I have no illusions," she said gravely. "I choose to associate myself with the intellectual outcasts of the community. I see that road of compromise which you call rational effort clearly enough, but my feet refuse to tread it any longer. You need not pity me. After all, as I read history, the gadfly rôle has not been without value. Come with me, Hilda," she added suddenly, turning to one sympathetic face in the room. But Hilda shook her head.

"As for Mildred," Janet went on, taking her revenge, "there is no use in asking her. You can't make a radical out of a saint."

Mildred looked far from saint-like at this speech. A not unbecoming rose of resentment ran up into the roots of her hair. She bit her lip and was silent.

"Mildred is n't in the least a saint," laughed Hilda. "At least, if a saint has to practise unrestricted resignation to things as they are. She hates

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our civilization as much as you do. Mildred dear, we may never be all together again; tell us your plans. Yes," — as the flush deepened again on Mildred's brow, — "I think you ought."

Deeds were easier than words to Mildred, but when it was a case of witness-bearing, the strings of her tongue were unloosed. Besides, she had stood shoulder to shoulder with these comrades through many troublous days, and she loved them one and all, Janet not least.

"I 'm afraid" — there was a little meek malice in her glance — "I never should have courage to go about reforming things in general, as Janet intends to do. I am a very modest person; I shall have quite enough to do with reforming myself."

"A familiar cry" — Janet spoke a little more scornfully than was needful; "the soothing-syrup of the indolent."

"Janet, don't spar," interposed Hilda, and Mildred retorted with spirit: —

"To reform one's self to-day implies more than the application of truisms; it means experiment with new virtues."

"New virtues!" droned Mr. Mervyn. "I supposed virtues, at least, had not altered since the pyramids, — or the decalogue."

"New applications, then," said Mildred. "Do you think the race paused with 'Thou shalt not'?

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Look at history; you will see the moral sense exploring new regions in every social order, and conquering the automatic tracts of activity, so to speak, gradually for itself. To be good to-day implies discovery and practice of a new moral code arising from the modern intuition of solidarity. It means deliberate and often painful pioneer effort to recognize, and then to escape, social sin."

"Which you can't do," mourned Janet, — "since it clings to every garment woven under the present industrial system."

"Yes, I know," — Mildred's assent came swiftly. "We can't escape the burden of the communal guilt. What is more, it would be selfish to try to. That is what my years here have taught me. When I came, I had the expectation of separating myself from the evil world some day in a religious order; that seems to me now a false spiritual luxury. I am not going to cut myself off from God's great miserable, sinning world. We agree there, Janet."

All listened amazed to this outpouring of confidence from the reticent Mildred.

"No! I stay in the world and bear the burden of its sin with my brothers, — and my Lord. But only so far as I must, on pain of forfeiting fellowship. So far as personal power and choice can go, I mean, without separating myself from humanity, to lead the right life, the Christian life. Janet, without preaching socialism, I'm going to live it.

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Straight away, now. Why not? Solvitur ambulando!"

Mildred looked merry, mysterious, and very sweet.

"Are you founding a coöperative colony, Mildred?" laughed Janet. "If you'll start it in Colorado, I'll live there. And I hope you'll make better towels, if towels are to be your industry, than those slazy ones we got from the Christian Socialists in Tennessee."

Mildred shook her head. "Those towels — and other things — discouraged me. I am not going — to use your pet word — to monkey with production. My friends who are to be with me and I know just enough about it to know that we would better leave it alone. But granted our limitations, it seems to me that there is something for us to do. To organize one's private life, especially in regard to consumption, on a really Christian basis, on coöperative lines, seems to me worth while. I think it yet more worth while if a group of people will do that thing together, and let their results and ideals be generally known. That is what we plan — a half dozen of us. We have taken a house on Allen Street, round the corner here, and we mean to live there in a little community and make ourselves necessary to the district."

"I don't see that you are doing anything but start a new settlement on a recognized religious basis," said Janet.

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"Well, yes," returned Mildred. "Only a religious settlement wishes to convert its neighbors; we, as I said, hope to convert ourselves."

A chuckle from O'Hagan surprised the company. He had been moved only to yawns during Janet's talk, but now his eyes rested curiously on Mildred.

"In the middle ages," the girl went on, "the characteristic sins of society were those of violence; people who wished to escape from their bondage emphasized the opposite virtues of non-resistance and withdrew into cloisters. The characteristic sin to-day is that of greed; it dominates society and threatens the Church. What is the way of freedom for the Christian? My friends and I believe that it is the way of voluntary poverty. But the poverty must not be the kind that insults God's love by scorning His gifts, as that of an earlier time too often did; it must be the kind that springs from love, and brings peace to those who know brotherhood. The times are quite ripe for a new service of St. Francis' lady. We must avoid asceticism on the one hand as much as luxury on the other. We dedicate ourselves to the utmost simplicity of life compatible with health and joy. Hilda, you have told me that your mother believed that the end of life was to discover the art of living; and I liked the thought. My companions and I are going to seek the art of Christian living in an age with

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new conditions which force us to shape that art anew."

Catching sight of Janet's sceptical face Mildred changed to a more practical tone.

"Most of us have quite a little money. Perhaps none of you know that I am rather a rich woman myself. I have about ten thousand dollars a year. I don't know how much I shall have to spend on living as I plan, — that is what I have to find out. But I should think not over a thousand, perhaps less."

Mr. O'Hagan, who had been stretching his great limbs comfortably in a Morris chair, sat up suddenly.

"That I should hear any one with ten thousand a year propose to live on ten hundred!" he exclaimed. "You won't do it. 'T ain't American!"

"It is Christian," Mildred answered, smiling.

"Show me that kind of Christianity and I'll believe in it."

"That," returned Mildred very quietly, but with a light in her eyes, "is just what we mean to do."

"And when our experiment is finished," she went on presently, "and we have found out a little more about essentials and non-essentials, — well, — we have our dreams."

She hesitated, but catching sight of Katie Donovan's eager eyes fixed upon her, presently went on:

"Dreams are safe; mine is of a fellowship of

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Christian people, not withdrawing from the world, but pledged to strict simplicity of life, with definite limitation of expenditure, — the pledge will not be sentimental, but concrete and explicit, and to social service — simply a third order of St. Francis, modernized."

Katie's eyes were shining. "Do you know," she burst out, "what you will be doing for the poor working-people? You will be showing them how the true riches is inside, not outside. What chance have they to know it when all the rich people they know that speak soft and have fine feelings live in big houses and spend most all their incomes on themselves? I never understood till I knew Miss Lathrop what it really meant to be rich."

"I suppose you will be a church organization?" asked Mr. Mervyn.

Mildred shook her head. "Our strength is from the Church. Our desire is to feel and show her power, transforming our life; but we shall seek no official sanction. You see," she went on, brooding, "so many things have been killed by official sanction. I don't agree with Janet that the conventional expressions of Christianity retard real social progress. She thinks them a delusion of the devil, I believe. I think them the real work of a Divine Spirit, but of that spirit hampered by the spirit of the world. I don't want any compromise about our little society. I want it to be an expression of

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Christianity absolute. Oh," she kindled as she went on, "it is redemption accomplished, it is freedom that we long for, that we shall show to others. Ours is the way of salvation; all who watch us tread in it will see that it is the way of happiness."

"Happiness!" said Janet half wistfully, half scornfully, as if the word were a far cry of which her sorrowful soul could hardly catch the echo.

"Yes, happiness." Mildred's cheeks were a deeper pink. "Of course the burden of the communal guilt will still rest upon us; of course we shall live at the heart of the world's sorrow. But we shall have joined the blessed company of those meek who inherit the earth."

"I believe," Hilda spoke slowly, thinking, "that a great many will come to you. There are throngs of souls ill at ease, sitting as it seems to them in darkness and the shadow of death, who wait for just the summons that you will speak."

A deep tenderness was in the look that Mildred bent upon her friend.

"Come with us, Hilda," she breathed with an intensity of longing in her tone.

But Hilda shook her head, though her face softened. Janet had been her chosen intellectual comrade during her stay in the city wilderness, but Mildred was the companion of her heart.

"I should be happy," said Janet demurely, yet with an undercurrent of appeal, "to welcome you

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to Colorado, Miss Lathrop, as assistant editor of the 'Anarchist Banner.'"

But Hilda shook her head again, smiling, while Mr. Mervyn exclaimed, "You have offered that place once already, and it has been accepted. Are these your business methods?"

"I shall have to flock by myself," said Hilda half lightly, half sadly. "Perhaps I may end with you, Mildred, if you will take a perilous infidel into your fold. But I 'm not ready yet. Mr. O'Hagan," she added with a sudden turn, "what do you think of all these schemes?"

The labor leader's face had been looking now grim, now amused.

"Well-ll," he said slowly when thus appealed to, "as for Miss Frothingham's socialism, — I have n't any use for socialism, as I see it, because the socialists they quarrel among themselves worst of any folks there be; but I guess her socialism is n't going to do anybody no harm, and there 's no doubt it 'll be spicy reading. Miss Ellis's schemes are very pretty to hear her tell of. But, see here, what I want to know is, where does the labor movement come in? How are you proposing to free the workers? That 's what I say. Nothing else but what is just amusing yourself. A shorter working-day — industrial justice — that 's what is needed. Get better conditions for the workers; you 've heard me say it before, you 'll hear me say it again. It 's

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the only thing that goes to the root and purges the system. The rest is all quack remedies and won't ever fell the tree."

Mr. O'Hagan's grim earnestness expelled all desire to smile at his metaphors from every one but the irrepressible Janet. Desirous of a diversion she strolled over to Katie Donovan and pinched her cheek.

"I should like to know what this wise little head has to say about it," she smiled. "Which of us young women you 've known at Langley House do you think is likely to do most to solve the social problem?"

They all expected the delicate head to turn swiftly to Katie's beloved Miss Lathrop, and perhaps Hilda herself experienced a touch of chagrin when Katie's reply came.

"She is n't here," the girl spoke with a hint of mischief. "It 's Mrs. Carroll — Miss Jessie Bancroft. The woman who does the most is the woman who makes the right kind of a home."

Mr. O'Hagan and Mr. Mervyn surprised each other in nodding simultaneous assent and desisted a bit guiltily.

"And hers is the right kind," Katie went on. "It 's here in Lincoln Street, and it 's — it 's sort of heavenly. When I seen her the other day coming into her sweet parlor with her baby in her arms and her hair all fluffy, she looked just like the pic-

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tures of the madonna. And she said to me, 'Katie,' she says, 'Mr. Carroll and I want this whole neighborhood to be happier because we are so happy.' I felt holy as I looked at her."

A little sigh hovered on the lips of all the single women present except Mildred. Mr. Mervyn glanced half involuntarily at Janet, who slowly colored a trifle. Or was it his imagination? For she was speaking incisively to Hilda.

"Your turn now, my dear; what are you going to do."

"Katie knows," smiled Hilda, and the laundry-girl's dreamy face kindled.

"We want to know too."

"I don't care to say much about it," said Hilda quietly. "Don't be afraid," she added; "I will keep the lines of communication open."

Her friends waited expectant, and she went on, with recollection strong upon her of the hour when she had wrenched herself asunder from her peaceful academic world, and had set her feet in the untrodden paths which led, she trusted, to the Land of Reality and the City of Brotherhood. Had her trust been warranted? Had her feet indeed reached the sacred stones of that city? The light touch of Katie Donovan's hand was on hers as she spoke.

"I mean to return to my profession."

"What!" cried Janet sharply; but Mildred only

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smiled into her friend's face with loving confidence, and Katie's fingers tightened round her own.

"An honest trade is too useful a thing to abandon. My old friends were right when they urged that point of view on me. All my best years were given to training in art; my place is in its service."

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. Mervyn; and Janet really looked troubled.

"Are you going back to painting or to teaching art?" she queried.

"Neither. I should think you would know, Janet,"— Hilda spoke with an accent of slight reproach, — "that I could never be happy in a pursuit which ministered only to the privileged. My place is with the workers. But it is with those workers who are the servants of beauty."

"Beauty?" murmured Janet; "while people starve?"

"Yes," answered Hilda courageously. "Shall we be wiser than the force that yearly produces the spring despite all human pain? May we claim to be more tender? Mildred could urge this better than I; but even I feel dimly, and the feeling has brought me great peace, that since the universal order does not weary of creating beauty ever anew in a world tormented and stained, we must not weary either. Do you know what has taught me this?" she laughed a little. "The tree in the back

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yard! I see at last that my duty is to deepen and quicken the sense of beauty in America. And so," she concluded more lightly, "I am going to disappear."

Hilda's quietude was gone, a radiant expression of compelling gayety replaced the sad lucidity that usually marked her face.

"What are you going to disappear into, if we may ask?" said Miss Morse.

Hilda did not reply directly; she turned to Janet.

"Something you said in my first week here about gifts of the different races that compose the new America made a deep impression on me. Ever since I have watched and studied these racial groups, and I agree with you. Our immigrants, except the Hebrews, are weakest in the qualities of business efficiency on which America puts a premium; they are strongest in the human and æsthetic powers that too often betray them to economic disaster."

She paused, and then went on abruptly: —

"And so, you see before you, my friends, a factory-girl. No, I am not going simply to roam about in disguise for a few months and take notes for magazine articles. I am going seriously to learn various trades, and it will take me a long while. Katie is going with me," — Katie gave an ecstatic little gasp of acquiescence; — "she will study the

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trades with me, and Maggie Murphy will take care of us in the little home we mean to have, now here, now there."

"Do you plan to subsist on your wage as a factory-hand?" asked Mr. Mervyn.

"Oh, no!" cried Katie impulsively; "Miss Lathrop is n't used to that, you know. She 'd die!"

"I fancy Katie is right," said Hilda, regretfully; "other factory-girls can't live in any real sense on their wages; I 'm not sure I could live at all. I shall have to leave the problem of consumption to Mildred, for I shall need my best strength. I am a practical person, not a sentimentalist, Mr. Mervyn."

"Very practical," said the lawyer, smiling a little. "Also, an ardent reader of Tolstoi."

"Yes, and in part a disciple," assented Hilda; "but not wholly. I do believe at times that the intellectual classes, so-called, will never be healthy again until they return to a more natural life, including some productive labor with their hands. My belief is intermittent, however. But when it fails, another takes its place. If manual work is a blessing, not a curse, I want my share of it; if it is a curse, not a blessing, I ought to take my turn. I vibrate constantly between these two points of view. But one or the other is true, and from either I see the same path before me — the path of the factory.

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"But I'm fortunate, you know," she went on blithely, "in that the arts and the crafts lie very near together. No, I can't tell you any more clearly what I am going to do. I only know that I want to study, in practical detail, as exhaustively as I can, the possible field for handicraft in modern industry."

"Your old mediævalism," muttered Janet scornfully.

"Don't interrupt me! — I was going on — and, more broadly, the real scope for creative æsthetic impulse. No; I'm not mediæval. I do not care to establish small esoteric experiments which can never undo or defy the great conditions of manufacture which have come to stay. But I'm convinced that it will be a fruitful thing to make a close study of certain chosen industries, which have an æsthetic element, with a view of finding what adjustments would be necessary to make them educational, and delightful to the worker, and in what way the creative art impulse could be fostered in them. It is not mediæval to hold that we are not always to make cheapness the one end, and that, without discarding the help of machines, the task before the industry of the future is to discover how it is to be, in the largest and most practical sense, life-giving to the producer. It's a large task, — I'm a little person, — but the task needs many a votary!" Hilda was pouring out her words with joyous energy. "Horror of our indus-

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trial conditions has deepened on me as I came near them," she concluded, "but I cannot content myself with general theory" — she turned to Henrietta — "still less with general attack" — she glanced at Janet — "nor can I rest in Mildred's beautiful aim of establishing a righteous standard for the personal life in the new democracy. For I am an artist, and I must monkey, Janet, with production."

"You won't monkey with it on a very large scale if you spend your time learning trades in detail," remarked Henrietta.

"Wait," — Hilda was still speaking gayly; "wait eight years, or ten. Wait till I've studied modern methods in dyeing, and weaving, and printing, and — " she checked herself. "When I am forty years old, — perhaps earlier, — I hope to reemerge. I begin to discern a fact hidden from the eye of youth, — that a great deal of life is yet before one at forty. Mildred, perhaps I'll come to live in your community then, — if I haven't a coöperative community myself. Mr. O'Hagan, all the workers in my commonwealth shall belong to labor organizations."

She fell into a muse, and ended half to herself: —

"Strange! I used to believe that phrase of Théophile Gautier's: "Il n'y a de beau que ce qui ne sert à rien"; and now I believe just the opposite. The beautiful only exists as found in use, as it springs from the common life of all and ministers

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to the common life of all. That is the kind of beauty for the lack of which America perishes."

Miss Abbott had come in unnoticed while Hilda was talking and stood listening, a look of pleasure on her quiet face. Mildred caught sight of her now and, turning swiftly, took the elder woman's hands in her own.

"Langley House has revealed us all to ourselves," she said.

"And now," replied Miss Abbott, a little ruefully, "just as the House is ready to stand for larger activities in civic reform, you are all leaving it!"

Compunction fell upon the three women.

"But you are sending us out, dear Miss Abbott," said Hilda after a moment. "I shall always think of the Settlement as a kind of watch-tower from which one sees the pathways leading to the Land of Hope."

Miss Abbott's smile deepened a little, amusement blending with the pleasure.

"Have you forgotten using that figure to me six months ago?" she said. "Only then you turned it, 'This House is a watch-tower from which one surveys a ruined world.'"

Hilda laughed with the others.

"I don't know how it is," she said, "but my whole outlook has changed. Six months ago American civilization seemed hopeless to me. Wherever

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I looked I saw the law of greed showing itself in political, industrial, or social corruption, or worst of all, masked in self-deception. To-day my faith in democracy is restored. A great reaction against it may come, — my friend Mr. Ferguson expects such a reaction within the next twenty years, — but whatever happens, I do not think my faith will falter. All our fragmentary struggles in reform and philanthropy, which seem so futile and even dangerous in detail, are charged with promise to me now, as I see them in relation to the one great underlying task of social reconstruction. We may never see that reconstruction accomplished. We may even die in the reaction. But we can say with the psalmist, 'Show thy servants thy work and their children thy glory.' All through this strange, sad civilization of ours I feel forces at play making for social salvation, — organic filaments weaving the new society to be. I suppose it is because I have hold of my own thread at last that I can feel the vibration of the others — of each of yours. Weaving goes on silently and slowly; often the threads bewilder us, crossing and tangling; all the weavers guess at the design, none sees it yet. But who knows how soon it may be revealed?"

Hilda's mood had sobered as she spoke. "I am thankful to have found my own thread," she went on quietly. "And there 's a song I shall sing at my weaving, 'Life without industry is guilt; industry

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without art is brutality.' Those words will be inscribed over my 'bottega' some day,—if ever I get it. Yes, I am to be the servant of beauty, but beauty the creating of which shall bring life to many and which when created shall bring life to many more. I can't call myself a listener any longer," she concluded lightly once more, "after pouring out my mind to you in this way. Shall we all meet ten years from now and tell our tales?"

"Let us try," said Mildred. "A new century will soon dawn."

"I will come if anarchism thrives enough to pay my expenses East," sighed Janet.

But though they all laughed they hoped to keep the agreement; for tried comrades do not part without a pang.

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Evening had gathered unheeded by the talkers; the moon was full, and the one visitation of beauty which man cannot wholly exorcize, the light from heaven, bathed the bare room and the sordid street with soft, unimpassioned glory.

"How light transfigures!" mused Janet, leaning from the window. "It restores an earth untainted. Just now it is joy to look out on this dreary squalor. I have felt the same thing walking down Lincoln Street in the bright spring sunshine."

"Yes, is n't it strange?" The visionary look of

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the Celt was in Katie's eyes. "I 've wondered about that so often. You can't see the light. It only shows other things. And what it shows is ugly. Yet when it 's there you 're glad."

Mildred lifted her pure face to the pure planet.

"It is always there," she said in a low voice. "The tired old earth circling through space can never escape it. Over our ravaged civilizations the light from heaven forever shines. That is because joy is a larger fact than pain, and love than sin."

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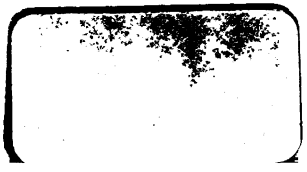
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